

THE

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRED

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**The
Orb's**
jukebox

**George
Crumb**
the black
angel sings

No U Turn
drum 'n' bass terror

John Zorn
for beginners

Ryoji Ikeda
headphonaut

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your monthly exploration of new music

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SPACETIME CONTINUUM

Remit Recaps

(Reflective REPCD9)

A superb remix package featuring reworkings by Carl Craig, Herbert, Autchra, Subtropic, Valcorra, Higher Intelligence Agency and Spacetime himself. See also: REF011 - Various featuring Pled - South Of Market EP; REF013 - Spacetime Continuum - Kero; REF015 - Remit Recaps (Carl Craig mixes); REF018 Remit Recaps (Herbert & Subtropic mixes) and REPCD06/REPLP8 Spacetime Continuum - Emi Ecaps

JEDI KNIGHTS New School Science (Universal Language EV0042/CD)

The critically lauded debut album from those naughty Knights, better known as Global Communication, on their Universal Language label. Has sold in excess of 18,000. Out now: EV0081 Danny Breaks - You Ain't Down, EV0083 NY Connection - Bless The Funk EP. Forthcoming: EV00002 Gent - Vulcan Phrases, EV00043 Jedi Knights - Big Knockers. Look out for the first release on sister label Heard by The Mod Wheel to a record store near you soon.



PHOTEK

T'Raenon

(Op-Art OP1)

Rupert Parker's first foray into Techno on Kirk Degorog's highly respected, relaunched A R T imprint. See also: OP2 Autosection - Caught Short. OHS The 4th Wave - Attention Please, OP4 Paul W Teabrooks (aka Stasis) - Nova. Forthcoming: OP6 Sensume EP.



MIKE AND RICH Expert Knob Twiddlers (Resphex CAT027LP/CD/MC)

A fun filled, funky collaboration between Richard D James (Aphex Twin) & Mike Muzer. Parodies which has reached up 20,000 sales to date. Out now: CAT045LP/CD/MC The Gentle People - Soundtracks For Living, CAT020EP, Bradley Strider - CAT030EP/CD. D'Arcangelo EP. Forthcoming: CAT048LP/CD Sam And Valley, CAT023LP/CD Caustic Window (Richard James).



VARIOUS

United Mutations

(Lo Recordings LLP03/LCD003)

Forthcoming: Twisted Science - Cold Fusion EP; Magoo - Squashed Mosquito EP (inc Funk! Phoria Mix, doymeking vs Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) EP, Transatlantic Drum & Bass anime guitar noise collision, the crackpot bears available meet the master of Lo-Fi noise, Do School vs Nu School and then some); Lo Recordings Vol 4 - Further Mutations: Part 2 of United Mutations featuring Shweebee, UK, Luke Vbert, Mike Flowers, Beckum Ascend/Torotek, Springheel Jack, Wormhole, Squaresquisher, Demick May, Robert Wyatt & others. Further defining the indefinable.

DR ROCKIT The Music Of Sound (Clear CLR424/CD)

Debut album from the hugely acclaimed Dr Rockit, also known as Washmountain and Haricot. Forthcoming: A series of 4 EPs from Melaneros (CLR425/7/8), an EP and CD from As One (CLR430), an album from Melaneros (CLR425/CD) and a 12" and album from Japanese artists Reflection (CLR431/2).



We also distribute Blast First, Leaf, Pussyfoot, Swim and Warp releases, among many others. If you have a problem getting hold of any of these releases contact Chi-Keat Man on 0171 284 1155.



demix



WIRE

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editor's idea

Back in the office after the Xmas and New Year break, and the first executive decision of 97 gets a haircut or take up an invitation to apply for £100,000 of lottery money to fund some ridiculously ambitious extracurricular Wire initiative. A tough one I'm still pondering it several days later on the tube - in to London's Spitalfields and the first Scratch of 97 Cornerpush are headlining, but I've never really connected with their peculiar blend of bruised poetic and ramshackle raga rock, and like many in the capacity crowd I am here to witness a potentially incendiary, possibly revelatory, maybe disastrous soundbath between improving guitar hero Derek Bailey and two DJs from London's Rumpus Room roller with the drum 'n' bass selection.

I don't know Derek personally, we've never been introduced and now I think about it I'm not sure we've even talked on the phone, a fact which might disappoint at least one reader who writes on this month's Letters page. If I had to cite just one musician who embodied what I will reluctantly refer to as the spirit of *The Wire*, however, then Derek would be it.

No doubt he will recoil in horror from the award of such a glowing prize, but right or wrong, I have always thought of Derek as a musician whose work has been based on the consistent belief that music is a constantly evolving and mutating language, an open-form able to accommodate all life that surrounds it. And sure enough, watching him 'duet' with the Rumpus Room DJs I am struck by the sensation of witnessing a new vocabulary emerging from the overlapping vernaculars of free improvisation and breakbeat culture.

For an hour Derek intersects switchblade-lexical guitar responses as the breakbeat mix peaks and troughs, shifts the mood and breaks the flow. Aside from the fact that it sounds hair-raising, drop-dead fantastic, the performance is a small triumph for those who believe that not everything that can be said via music has been, underlining the fact that cultural border-crossings, and the kind of sonic fictions which they give rise to, have a deep-rooted social dimension as well as a purely aesthetic one. What started out as a mediated event ended up as a genuine dialogue between two worlds, both of which became a little less circumscribed as a result.

Coincidentally, that morning I had received a package in the post containing a CD reissue of Derek's *Musik And Dance*. It has been sent all the way from Nashville, Tennessee by Dean Blackwood, manager of another great guitar maverick, John Fahey. The CD features a previously obscure recording of Derek's 1980 Paris performance with the remarkable Buoh dancer Min Tanaka. It is the first release on Fahey's new Nashville-based Reverent label, and even before I listen to it, the notion of a CD which combines the ugly beauty of free improvisation with arcane Japanese performance rites being ressed out of the home of Country & Western is irresistible. Luckily, the music is extraordinary also.

Arriving home from Scratch at one in the morning, knackered but still high on the adrenalin generated by the night's events, I put the CD on and am transported into a netherworld of microcosmic events suspended in riveting tension. On paper, if you break the music down to its component parts it can appear comical: Derek's snapping strings, rustling note flumes, bell-like harmonics and sudden intervals, Tanaka shuffling mysteriously to one side, sounding like he is hauling bodies across the stage one moment, put dancing in flippers the next, the unforeseen contribution of an elemental third party, a rainstorm of monsoon proportions lashing the roof of the performance space, a disused forge, and sounding on tape like the background fizz of heavy radio static. Yet it's another spellbinding performance, not diminished one iota by the passage of time or the transfer to a new medium. In fact, the music's utterly alien qualities are enhanced by the abstraction of home listening. But once again, what comes across most strongly is the feeling of advanced intelligences searching for a common language in which to communicate across the vast distances of time, space, culture and geography. Forgive me if I sound like I'm coming over all utopian on you, and extrapolate that the two performances mentioned here, both undertaken it seems to me in climates of mutual expansion and exchange, can illuminate a world beyond the actual music, suggesting a model for how we might better live our lives. But if there is a point to all the genre-capsizing multi-dimensional hybrids which define much of the music featured in these pages, then surely that is it.

TONY HERRINGTON

The March 97 Issue of *The Wire*

Another bumper batch of features, interviews, CD reviews, books, multimedia, live stuff, etc
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letters

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Virtual vtritol

David Toop's September 96 column (*The Wire* 151), which only recently came to my attention, simply begs for a withering backdraft. His myopic reduction of my book *Escape Velocity* to its chapter on cyberpunk and rock, and his woeful misreading of that chapter, are lamentably typical of the British pop press with its scarring, tunneling obsession with the subatomic minutiae of pop fadsism.

Escape Velocity is a critique of the cultural politics of fringe computer culture, in the chapter Toop seizes on I unravel cyberpunk sci-fi's knotty relationship to popular music, juxtaposing its romanticisation of 60s rock and 70s punk with its ironically reactionary recoil from the synth-and-drum-machine tradition that would seem to be quintessentially cyberpunk.

The chapter in question is not a core sample of the sedimentary history of wired music, hence its deafening silence on House, rave, Jungle and related forms of mixing music for cyborgs (not necessarily a pejorative) — a sin of omission unforgivable to the British pop press, whose blinkered fixation on one-minute musical microtrends blinds it to the thumpingly obvious fact that my chapter on the historical crosstalk between cyberpunk sci-fi and rock is just that.

Even so, I'd expected more of Toop, whose *Rap Attack* is an invaluable resource and whose most recent effort comes highly recommended. Disappointingly, he rambles from xenophobic kvetchings about *Escape Velocity*'s Americentric focus (legitimated, as I argue in my introduction, by the US's historical role as a shining city upon a hill, consecrated to myths of technological progress) to a feline swipe at Sielan's dated seabirds to an interrogation of cyberpunk's credulous faith in punk's unalloyed authenticity (ironically echoing the very argument I make on pages 106-7 of my book) I, and *The Wire*'s readers, deserve better.

Mark Dery via e-mail

Worldly wisdom?

Stockhausen may be an interesting composer, loved and loathed in equal measure that he may even be considered a Wagner for our times. But it's a bit much to suggest he invented World Music. (Barry Witherden, *The Wire* 154) I've always thought World Music was a facile, obese term anyway, because to the Brazilian Indian tribes with their clockwork radio, The Spice Girls may qualify as World Music.

World Music was always there, it's just that composers in the West weren't always looking for it. So perhaps Barry Witherden means Stockhausen discovered

and/or integrated non-European musics into a European style, which is an entirely different thing. And still wrong.

Bartók and Kodály, for example, integrated Balkan scaling into their music before Stockhausen discovered short-wave. It's debatable as to whether their music, on the cusp between European and Middle-Eastern styles, qualifies under our current definition of World Music but that's not the point. Composers predating Stockhausen were well aware of World Music.

Ravi Shankar, referred to by George Harrison as "the Godfather of World Music" and a near contemporary of Stockhausen's, is probably more deserving of having the dubious title of inventor of World Music thrust upon him. And while on the subject of The Beatles, 1967's *Hymn* forms the blueprint for 68's "Revolution No 9". I stand to be corrected, but I seem to recall George Martin writing of it as a joint compositional work of tapes submitted by all four Beatles, but the initial Beatles contact with the avant garde came from Paul McCartney and not John Lennon. But as usual it is John's name that generally makes an easy bedfellow with Art while McCartney's role is reduced to that of milkman-friendly tunesmith.

Howard Ingram Belfast

Art and Kraftwerk

I was disappointed that your review of Terre Thaumitz's *Die Roboter Rubato* (Mike Barnes, *The Wire* 155) was little more than an addendum to Cud Duce's ideological amnesia *Switched On* Wagner (apparently grouped together for nothing more than their mutual sarcastic stabs at classical music). By saying Thaumitz's abstraction of Kraftwerk's compositions fell short of the 'impeccable suitedness' of The Balanescu Quartet's metered renditions of Kraftwerk on *Possessed*, you seem to have missed the fundamental point at which Thaumitz's versions break from past Kraftwerk covers. This concept of applying randomisation and fragmentation to Kraftwerk's infamous precision (a metaphor for the collision of public and private spheres in identity politics) is the theoretical basis for the project, which is outlined in Thaumitz's rather substantial accompanying text, a text that seems to have been mysteriously overlooked or unabsorbed by the reviewer. As *The Wire* is considered one of the more coherent voices in contemporary music, it is a shame that you took a rare project rooted in evocative social commentary and reduced it to pure formalism (the very paradox Thaumitz seeks to forever anticipate).

Elizah via e-mail

Progressive thinking

I heartily echo the praise heaped on your magazine by Gary Steel in your September 96 issue (*The Wire* 151). I too look forward to each new issue, and the only frustrating thing about it is that I'll probably never get to hear half the music in it because record stores are pretty hopeless when it comes to stocking obscure stuff, and 40 bucks or thereabouts is a lot to risk on taking a punt on some of this stuff. I also endorse Gary's comments about Prog rock. I'd like to see a more reasoned coverage of this in your magazine. The two-part A-2 you had a while back (*The Wire* 133/4) was full of snide comments and old clichés about dinosaurs, etc. I would have expected a more sympathetic approach from a magazine like yours. Prog might have lost the plot by the mid-70s as groups like ELP and Yes went in for ever more elaborate staging and double- and triple-albums, but even those bands produced some great work in their earlier days. And groups like King Crimson (73-74 version), Can, Faust and Henry Cow still sound as fresh and exciting today as they did 20 or more years ago.

David MacLennan Wellington, New Zealand

Poxy proxy

1. You are a very individual monthly. I hope you can keep going because you're the only half-decent report on music.
2. I used to play in a reasonably popular avant rock group which was critically well received but listening back utterly soulless.
3. Your Top 50 Records of the Year (*The Wire* 155) was full of self-reference, taste and with a new ear for musical agendas. But most of the records were bloodless, without humanity, without warmth. Where was *Rising of the Shadows*? (*Heartbreaking Records*).
4. You are the angry nerds with the specky specs and that oddball collection is wearing you out. Louise Gray voted for Patti Smith. I'm surprised she was allowed a female star. Only Derek Bailey is allowed.

The Proxy

Corrections

Issue 155. We neglected to credit Rob Young for writing the article on Khan and Jammer. Unit on pages 16 and 17, and Steve Ford for taking the photo of John Law on page 13. In Soundcheck some label contacts were either missing or listed incorrectly. Here's how they should have read. Communication through Cargo, Loric through Complete, Shunied through Play it Again Sam, Xtreme through RTMDSC. □

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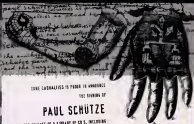
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soundings february

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts



Prince Paul and friends

Live choice

Djange Bates Premiere of new work. Some More Updates performed by London Sinfonietta and his group Human Chain London QEH: 16 February, 8:30pm, £10/£8, 0171 960 4242

Pierre Boulez The IRCAM superno is in town to witness the UK premiere of his recent composition *explosive*, which utilises the latest developments from his Paris computer lab. George Benjamin also conducts works by Varèse and Stravinsky London QEH: 21 February, 7:45pm, £10/£6, 0171 960 4242

Isiah First full-length tour by the vocal drum 'n' bass poppers. Edinburgh Venue (18 February), Glasgow King Tut's (19), Leeds Cockpit (20), Birmingham Institute (22), Brighton Concord (26), Cambridge Junction (27), Bristol Trinity Hall (1 March), Manchester Jazz (4), London Astoria (5)

Bee Neill & DJ Spooky *Illness* Fourth World trumpet crossover from the hippest duo in New York. London Jazz Cafe, 30 February, 10:15/7.50, 0171 344 0044

Yoko Ono & Fluxus Retrospective exhibition of the movement that included Ono, Nam June Paik, George Brecht et al as part of the South Bank's Towards The Millennium series. This collection of posters, sculptures and ephemera tries to recapture the magic. London RSC Foyer Balcony, 7 February-23 March, 10am-10:30am daily, free, 0171 960 4242

Parallel Series Showcase of Pulse

Records' electroacoustic, sub-label, with on-stage soundchecks by Paul Kendall, Simon Fisher Turner, Bruce Gilman and Russian climatologist Andrei Samsonov. London Purrell Room, 21 February, £8/£5, 0171 960 4242

Prince Paul HiHop and psychoanalysis from the perky former De La Soul cohort. London Jazz Cafe, 24 February, £10/£8.50, 0171 344 0044

David Shee Sub Row's plunderphonic edictum rounds off a short UK tour with dates at Leeds Arts Centre, 30 January, 8:30pm, 0113 245 5570; Lancaster Gregson, 31 March, 8:30pm, 01524 582805/189959, and London Spitz, 1 February, 8:30pm, 0171 247 9747

Rinô Sherman Soulful dub from the voice of Dm+U and his group. London Jazz Cafe, 13 February, £12/£10, 0171 344 0044

Trans Am Headline date by ZZ Top/karaoke-influenced rockers Trans Am, plus support from Scottish square-pegs Genger. London Onyxville, 26 February, £6, 0171 267 1577

Club spaces

Beet Weard Sonic strangeness and bizarre beats with Kushi and Johnny Octopus (2 February), Dan & John Kushi (9). Environmental Science/Siem Records (16), and Full Moon Sessions (23) London Jazz Bistros Sunday, 7:30pm-midnight, £2, 0171 236 8112

The Big Chill Special Valentine's Day one-off marking the return of the Chill following their disastrous summer festival includes Squasheuther, Global Communication, LTJ, Balam, Another Fine Day, Nelson Diktors, Paul Thomas, Knights Of The Occasional Table, Daniel Pemberton, Grinzig, The Gentle People and Future 3 London Briton Academy, 14 February, 9pm-6am, £10, 0181 372 9735

Discotheq Mop, that's not a typo: they've changed their name for 97, a year which locks off with two days of transgressive fun Bill Drummond and Mark Manning (authors of *Bad World*), Kathy Acker and Stewart Home give readings to launch a new publishing venture entitled *Kick Heb* (31 January, 8-11pm, free). On the following night, you can hear the low and throbs of Panasonic, Jack Suckin Stanger and friends playing the music of Phil Niblock (1 February,

Born-Live, tickets from Rough Trade/Fat Cat Records only). Both events are at London Southwark House Gallery, 63 Charterhouse Gallery, Smithfield Market, EC1

Electronic Lounge Live showcase radio-casts by Joe Banks aka Disinformation should be quite a buzz. London ICA, 4 February, 9pm-1am, £2.50/£1.50, 0171 498 3032

Kilnbeek Club Launch of new space for experimental Improv, musical contraptions and quirky film/visuals run by Budyak's Hugh Mescalfe. First night features Headbutt and Alan Tomlinson live (14 February), then Budyak, John Grenier's machines (21), Sedak Zebai's Seeds Of Creation, Oen Knight's Big Mother and Vexen Weston (28). Expect surprises and much stranger things. London Water Rats, Fridge, 8:30-11:30pm, £3/£2, 0171 837 7269

Kosmische Parade of Krautrock weirdness with Volcano! The Best playing live, book signing by Alan and Steven Froeman (authors of *A Crack In The Cosmic Egg*), Kosmische DJs, Carlos Yellow psychedelic visuals and host Brian Barritt. London Upstairs at the Garage, 15 February, 10pm-2:30am, £4, 0171 607 1818

PM Scientist's Guests Rob Playford from Moving Shadow (5 February), DJ Hype (12), Cleveland Watkiss (19) and Kumo (26) at this drum 'n' bass melting pot. London Smithfields, 340 Farringdon Road, Wednesdays, 10pm-2:30am, £4/£3, 0171 236 8112

Rumpus Room Joining heads The Merry Franksters the month are Jo Sound System (2 February), Octopus Records showcase with Stranger vs Rolo Wednesday, Upprope and Johnny Octopus (9), hotly-tipped heads Jumper (16), and live sequencing from Electro vapour Gaggan (23). London Fitz & Fiken (formerly Albany), Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £3/£2, 0171 308 0588

Scratch First UK appearance by Rome, mutant dubsters and Toronto labelmates all the way from Chicago. Plus drum 'n' bass paranoia from T-Power, and regular Scratch DJs. London Spitz, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 20 February, 7pm-midnight, £6/£4

The Spread Another Weather of the winds, performance from Sons Of Silence. Scanner vs S4-dub dub live soundcheck at this multimedia weaving hole. London Gate Internet, 22-24 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1, 27 February, 7-11pm, £3/£2.50, 0181 883 0972

Radio

BBC Radio 1

One In The Jungle Fridays 10pm-midnight. Guest DJs provide hour-long broadcast mix.

John Peel Saturdays 5-8pm. Sundays 8-10pm. The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronic. Dub and the legendary sessions.

BBC Radio 3

Phonix It Mondays 10:45-11:30pm. Mark Russell and Robert Santal's thoughtful selection of avant garde rock, jazz, contemporary classical, etc.

Heart And Now Fridays 10-12pm. Contemporary music magazine focusing on the BBC.

Impressions Alternates Saturdays 10:45pm-11pm. Haden Jagers in interview and on record.

BBC Radio 6

Soundscape Sundays 3-5pm. Ashley Franklin plays instrumental. Beethoven, contemporary classical/guitar/mix. New Age and Ambient.

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Charlie Gillett Saturdays 7-9pm. Rock, soul, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more.

BBC Lancashire

On The Wire Saturdays 12-2pm. Steve Barker's seasoned New Music mix, dub, experimental, encompassed, old rock, free improv and more.

ICL Group Radio

The New World House Fridays 12:30-2:30am. Our rock, psychedelic, Jungle, avant garde, weird Ambient and global jams in themed sequences.

ICL 100 FM (London)

Buff Coat Wednesdays 7-9pm. Latest drum 'n' bass mix by Kenny Ken and DJ Hype.

Club It Up Wednesdays 2-4am. Specially recorded sessions and in-studio appearances.

Solid Steel Saturdays 8-10pm. Dub-dub-dub-dub from Goldcut and the Nuts crew.

The Chill Out Zone Sundays 6-7pm. Paul Thomas's experimental Ambient, dub and Electronic mix.

Gilbert Peterson Sundays 8-10pm. Electronic soul-jazz instrumental.

ICL 102 FM (Manchester)

Late Night Dance Soundtrack Mondays 10pm-12am. Host: Thompson plays Techno to Torque.

De Wuker Drun 'N' RnD Show Mondays 8-10pm. Tuff Jungle with XTC and Marica.

Weekend States Fridays 8-10pm. Something for the weekend from the weekend crew.

Alpha Waves Saturdays 4-6am. Environmental, techno and subconscious with Stuart James.

Georgie Sundays 4-6am. Electronic and beyond hosted by Auctre's Sean Booth and Rob Brown.



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There need to be new angles," he says. "Techno is rarely used in soundtracks, but it's so powerful, such noisy music. I want to do a shareware album, release a tape and say, 'This is free. If you like it just send a postcard.' I'd love to make installments where you can walk in there and move around. I'm up for anything. I don't care where it comes from. I think that's to do with the culture I've been brought up in. I don't have any firm roots in anything. I've got a hell of a lot of shit in my head." Or is that fertilizer?

ROB YOUNG Si Begg's "Opus" EP (Tresor through S&D) and "Nothing Is True Zen Say" EP (Chrome through S&D), Cabbage Boy's "Planet" EP (NTone through Vital), and Bigfoot's "Sasquatch" EP (Eukotech through Immoviel) are all available now.

Si Begg

Renegade soundwaves



Bundy Brown

Muso machinations

Bundy Brown is wary of hype and publicity. A founding member of Tortoise, Brown left the group when its cultivated facelessness was threatened by increased exposure and popularity. This time around, he's determined to remain out of the limelight. The press release for his new collaborative record, generically titled *Directions In Music*, boldly announces "Neither the songs nor the group are named as such. There will be no group tour and no group photos." "I don't know if that seems pretentious or what," Brown says to me at his Chicago apartment during the first interview he's granted, "but that was just the concept. It's just going to be the thing and it's going to have music on it, and hopefully people will then be able to deal with it on the level of what the music is about."

Despite his penchant for anonymity, Brown is making quite a name for himself. (The group, too, turns out to have a name, albeit a suitably evasive one: *Directions*.) He is fast becoming a sought-after engineer and producer, recording everything from punk rock to jazz at Chicago's Idyl and Some studios. Brown has been busy on filmwork, too, collaborating with Sean's Sooyoung Park to score Rea Tain's independent feature *Strawberry Fields*, and contributing to the soundtrack of John Hughes's new film *Recess*. The Rock. In the past year Brown has also produced gorgeously distended remixes for Rome and Tortoise, and is currently remixing tracks for Danny Moore of Soul Static Sound while working on sample-based HipHop material of his own.

Given this immersion in the aesthetic of mediation, the fine art of cut 'n' mix, *Directions In Music*—with a line-up centred around untreated guitars—comes as something of a surprise. "In a way it was me being reactionary at that point in time," Brown says with a laugh. "It was weird for me to quit this group [Tortoise] and then see them become huge and hear people talking about them as being on the forefront of some movement that I just didn't see as a movement. I was like 'Fuck post-rock. This is a load of horse shit. I'm gonna make a fuckin' rock record and the first song is going to be this tune I ripped off from The Allman Brothers.' That was part of what motivated me to make a record that was rooted in more basic and roots-oriented stuff, because that's a large part of what I dig if you look through my rock records. I have, right next to my Faust records, my Allman Brothers or AC/DC records—and I'm never gonna get tired of listening to that stuff!"

There is, indeed, a kind of rustic simplicity and ingenuousness to much of *Directions*, a series of hypnotic and wonderfully melancholy instrumental improvisations performed by Brown on guitars and bass, James Warden on guitar and Doug Schram on drums. The rambling lines and country twang of several tracks do recall something of 70s Southern rock. But

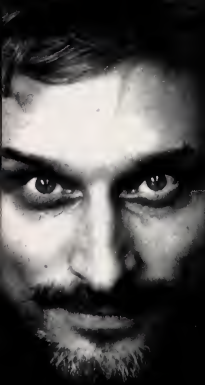
this latter-day innocence is not without traces of experience. *Directions*'s beguiling simplicity derives from the same inventive savvy that Brown brought to Tortoise, *Gastr Del Sol* and *Bastro*, and Schram to Him, Rex, *June Of 44* and *Codeine*. Its spare guitar and bass arpeggios organised around pulsed or sustained drones, for instance, reveal just how much Brown contributed to Tortoise's debut. These repetitive figures come to serve as the acoustic analogues of sampled loops, providing a bridge from American folk, Country and rock to post-rock and Electronica. Each track develops by accretion, exploring the horizontal dimension of the

soundscape, and evading the flat expanse of the Midwestern geography.

"What I really love is jazz," Brown declares, meditating on his recent production work for The Chicago Underground Orchestra and *Isotope*. "I would be happy not making any music of my own but just recording jazz and improvised music." Yet with all his current music-making and the buzz it's rightly generating, it's unlikely that even Brown's well-developed ambivalence will keep him hidden from the public eye for long.

CHRISTOPH COX *Directions In Music* is out now on *Thrill Jockey* (through Cargo)





Paul Kendall

Electroacoustic alchemy

The last 25 years have seen Paul Kendall as a Maths student, a bank clerk, a performance poet and as the man who built Mute Records' in-house studio. The recent inauguration of Mute's new Parallel Series has made several additions to this multiplicity of roles. Kendall is now by turns label head, AAR man, artist, producer, engineer and collaborator, in effect, the central figure in one of Mute's more daring ventures.

The series was established last year with a collaborative release by Bruce Gilbert, Robert Hampson and Kendall himself (entitled *Orr*), and has continued with works by Kendall solo (working as Piquet), a new radically austere remix (also involving Kendall) of Simon Fisher-Turner's *Shivam* called *Displaced Units* (credited to the brilliantly named Kendall-Turner Overdrive), and the first electroacoustic composition by

the prodigiously talented Russian pianist Andrei Samonov. From such beginnings the Parallel Series will hopefully go some way towards redirecting attention to some neglected features of electronic music's ancestry: not just Cage and Stockhausen, but Edgar Varèse, Herbert Eimert, Ted Dickschader, Vladimir Ussachevsky. "There was always an idea there to try and do it, but it wasn't until a couple of years ago that we set down, came up with the name and got going," explains Kendall.

The mere mention of 60s electroacoustics may conjure up visions of lab-coated scoopheads hunched over computer punch-cards, but the richness, timbral variety and otherworldly intensity of their laboriously constructed productions cannot be denied. An engaging, enthusiastic and self-deprecating South Londoner, Paul Kendall has been a devotee of electronic composition since his teens, and he sees the Parallel Series as an opportunity to spread the word about an area of music that has for too long seemed hermetically sealed. The four releases in the series so far have all explored the outer reaches of electronically manipulated sound with compelling and astringent clarity.

"After the British blues boom," he says, "I'd kind of had my fill of guitarists, and when I was 16 or 17 I started listening to a little bit of Stockhausen. I was a completely different soundscape and really exciting so I just fell in love with that. There were a few things earlier — like Joe Meek, whose stuff I really liked as a kid, although I didn't know it was Joe Meek then — but it's never really been songs for me, it's always been about sound. That's really my pure motivation. I went to university to study Maths — although I didn't actually get through the course — and I chose York because they had the best electronic music department. I'd managed to produce a piece of tape music prior to going to university, so I played it to a few guys there. They really liked it so I got in quite quickly with the department — they actually suggested that I did music there, until they found out that I knew absolutely jack shit about music! I was only interested in sound."

The cost of equipment in the 70s meant that Kendall's continued enthusiasm for electronic sound (after he abandoned academia) had to be held in check until he encountered Daniel Miller, who was looking for someone to build and maintain an in-house studio for his new Mute label. The two men shared an enthusiasm for electroacoustic composition — their friendship was cemented when Kendall gave Miller a recording by the leading British-based composer and theorist Dennis Smalley — and Kendall got the job. And although he spent much of the following decade expanding on Joe Meek's echoplex legacy by engineering and producing music with rock-based noise merchants like Loop and Nine Inch Nails, the idea that led to the germination of the Parallel Series never went away.

"My big thing has always been that: it would be really nice if you could cross-fertilise the audiences rather than the music. The cliquish aspect of the classical people with their sort of snobbish, over-protective approach is a

label lore

No. 004

Barraka El Farnatshi



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Run by: Pat Jabbar

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Ahlem, Amira Saqati, Argan, Harid Baroud

Description: Ancient-future sound of trance

North African/Arabic music enhanced with dub pressure and 90s studio techniques

Brief history: The label was started in 1990 to release Aisha Kandisha's Jamming Effects' *El Buys*, given that at this time no label was interested in dealing with Progressive-Arabic music apart from Aigeman rai and ethno-pop like Dissidenten. There were also no intentions of doing this seriously as a sort of job, it was more just for fun. The work and experiences of Bill Laswell (producer of the first AKJE and Ahlem LPs) changed the situation and gave the power and belief to go on with other bands/projects and to concentrate on a more efficient way of producing and marketing.

Statement of intent: Feeding a maximum of ears, souls and brains with nutritive Moroccan and North African grooves to fuck up latent racism and prejudiced visions towards the Arabic world, so as to bring the whole aspect of culture, values and especially of the 'real' Islamic education a little bit closer to all the nations.

Other activities: Enlarging our website at <http://www.marocainbarraka.com>. WAC-Raja Casablanca observations, Set OthMANIA, and sometimes a Mute/Madhouse 36-out of space flight to Kaoukabi Agibot.

Future plans: Records by Ahlem, Cheb Marra, Sopho, Amira Saqati, AKJE, Rai-X, plus one or two co-productions with Bill Laswell. Argan to tour Europe in summer 1997.

Choice cuts: Various — *Oudja Casablanca* Intersections Vol 1, Amira Saqati — *Agdal* Répétition Maqam.

(info & mailings to Pat Jabbar)

problem, especially when the exciting things that the rock/electronic bands were doing were helping to create a new potential audience for that classical music."

CHRIS SHARP: Parallel Series releases are distributed by RTMDISC. A live performance featuring various Parallel Series associates happens this month at London's South Bank. See Soundings for details.

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Istanbul

I am sitting in the midst of 80 or so dervishes in a small, hidden mosque located off a back street in Istanbul. As one they begin to lean forward in rhythm chanting the name of Allah — it's one of the most powerful sounds I've heard and speeds up like an express train to paradise. There's a waltz weaving through the sonic picture and a zither doing runs that send chills down your spine. Out of nowhere there's a solo voice — like a muezzin's call from a minaret — that is so full of longing it breaks your heart open. This is serious blues music. Just when I think the atmosphere can't get any more intense, 12 additional dervishes file into the room from the back and remove their black cloaks. They are wearing white robes underneath, and in unison they start spinning with incredible lightness and grace. This angelic whirling is a perfect counterpoint to the earthy chanting. I've been given permission to photograph the ceremony but I can't get up. I'm pinned back by the numbers but also by the sheer energy of the spiritual force field. In any case, photographs can't capture the disorienting sensation that the dervishes are defying gravity. It takes months of training before the dervishes can perform this whirling dance without getting dizzy. Like much Sufi ritual, the performance works on different levels and is heavy with symbolism. The funeral black cloak is a tomb; its removal represents the discarding of all worldly bes. The dervishes spin with the right arm extended to Heaven and the left pointing to the floor; grace is received from Allah and distributed to humanity. The dancers themselves represent the heavenly bodies circling the sun, which is manifested by the sheikh, the brotherhood's spiritual leader.

In Turkey, all dervishes are acolytes of Sufism and belong to one of a number of different brotherhoods. Most are Mevlevi Sufis, followers of the school founded by the Sufi saint and poet Rumi 700 years ago. Many of the followers of these ancient saints tell stories about them which suggest highly developed psychic powers, powers which are also attributed to the modern-day sheiks. The sheikh of the particular gathering (by the Jaffari brotherhood) possessed a quiet authority and seemed to almost radiate at its centre. After the ceremony I spoke to him via an interpreter. At one point the interpreter suddenly looked shocked and refused to continue with the conversation. Later he told me that the sheikh had quoted a poem from the 15th century which described in detail a dream he had had

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .



the previous night. The sheikh then explained the meaning of the poem and his dream.

The ceremony is called a *zikir*, which means remembrance, and as with other powerful Sufi musics such as the Qawwali music of Pakistan and the Assa music of Morocco, this extraordinary performance is finally not about entertainment nor aesthetics but spiritual purification and reconnection to the divine.

Officially, the *zikir* is still illegal in Turkey, and most gatherings have to be conducted in private or semi-secrecy. (The guide who brought me to the Jaffari ceremony, a carpet expert and part-time Sufi philosopher from the local bazaar, asked that his name not be mentioned in this article.) The dervishes were suppressed by Atatürk, the great Turkish moderniser and "father of the nation". But they are also mistrusted by the fundamentalists, as their esoteric belief system tends to veer away from strict Islamic teaching, appealing in the process to many Turkish artists, intellectuals and bohemians.

There are some officially sanctioned dervish performances, however. The largest is the celebration of the death of Rumi, who referred to the night of his death (17 December) as his wedding night. The ceremony takes place every year in sub-zero temperatures in Konya. In a basketball stadium a couple of thousand people including a busload of Japanese tourists witnessed about 50 whirling dervishes perform an immensely static ritual, which hasn't changed for hundreds of years.

The music is not the passionate *zikir*, however, but is provided by a semi-classical court orchestra which is dominated by the *ney*, a flute-like instrument whose mournful tones are also symbolic: the instrument



PHOTOS: PETER CULSHAW

apparently has the same number of holes as a human body and was originally cut from a particular type of reed; its sound represents the cry of the reed yearning to return to its origins (an obvious metaphor). But late at night in Konya, if you ask around, there are informal *zikirs* happening in people's houses, essentially wild jamming sessions (one I saw included a cheap synthesizer as accompaniment) where individuals drunk on ecstasy might throw off their jackets and start whirling if the spirit moves them.

But none of the Konya *zikirs* had the beauty of the one I witnessed in Istanbul. I asked the sheikh for the meaning of the ceremony. "The purpose of life is to remember Allah," he replied. "Every electron and proton is whirling round a nucleus, the planets whirl about the sun, and all of them are chanting for Allah. Even your heartbeat (and here he thumped his chest) is chanting: 'A-lah, A-lah!'" **PETER CULSHAW** A festival of Sufi culture will be presented in London later this year by The Music Village. For details contact: Music Village, Taybee Studios, 28 Commercial St, London E1.

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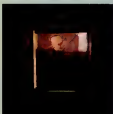
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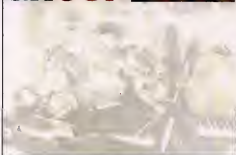


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Loving the alien

In the last ten years **George Crumb** has produced just 30 minutes of music. No matter. His pieces from the 1970s, such as the apocalyptic *Black Angels*, remain some of the most violent eruptions of sonic theatre ever written. Nick Kimberley meets a composer still alive to the extreme possibilities of organic sound

George Crumb has a theory about the composer in the 20th century. Well, he probably has many theories, but one seems particularly close to his heart: "There is this 20th century syndrome of a composer's decrescendo of productivity as they go through their career: their early music is unfortunately sometimes the better music, and later they try to find a way back to that period. I think of Sibelius, who stopped early, Ives, Berg, who died young, even for me Stravinsky: earlier is better."

Crumb acknowledges exceptions, and mentions in particular his fellow American Elliott Carter, born in 1908 and so a generation older than Crumb, born in 1929. Carter shows every sign of lasting forever and in the last ten years has produced a body of work of which a man half his age would be proud. Look at Crumb's catalogue of work, though, and you soon notice that the years since 1988 have been conspicuously lean. In 1991 a four minute piece called *Easter Dawning* and a more substantial work for chamber ensemble, *Quest*, which lasts 25 minutes, and on which the composer worked for about six years before it reached its final state in 1994. As he says, "The composition of *Quest* turned out to be much more of an arduous quest than I could ever have imagined."

Now length isn't everything, but that's a mere 30 minutes of music in nearly ten years, and this from a composer who, if he can't be accused of being over-prolific, certainly has a considerable oeuvre to his credit. Crumb himself is all too aware of his own decrescendo of productivity: "It's been very slow, a hiatus of a kind. I've somehow produced these two works, *Easter Dawning* and *Quest*, but it's not been a very productive period. It started about five years ago. Sometimes I think that with age you

have the time but you lack the energy to do several things at once. When you're younger you can do anything and it doesn't interfere with your work. But I hope there's something left: there are certainly areas I haven't touched, instruments I haven't used, and if I still have it left in me I would love to add one or two new works to my better pieces."

There is the slightest trace of regret in Crumb's voice as he tells me this, but there's a wistful sense of resignation as well, as if he's saying, "You just never know, do you?" We spoke towards the end of last year, when Crumb was in London to attend a performance of one of his works. Not untypically it was a work from the 1970s, *Black Angels*, the piece for string quartet that has perhaps brought his music to the largest audience, thanks in no small part to the advocacy of The Kronos Quartet, who had performed it at the Royal Festival Hall the night before the interview. Crumb seems genuinely moved by the size of the audience, not in any self-congratulatory way but simply that some 2000 people turned out for a concert of contemporary compositions. That's partly because of Kronos, of course, which has its own very particular following, but still it's an audience Crumb admires. And no doubt many were there at least in part to hear the angry buzz and drone of *Black Angels*, still viscerally disturbing a quarter of a century after its composition.

Black Angels, with its subtitle "Thirteen Images From The Dark Land", is a product of its time in the best sense, a fierce eruption of feeling against the monstrous machinery of war, in particular Vietnam. The traditional string quartet is amplified to a



point just this side of discomfort and the players are called on to chant, howl, whisper, play a variety of percussion instruments and to 'mistreat' their own instruments. All very 1970s? Yes, but with a ferocity of sentiment which even now is hard to ignore. This is concert music on the verge of becoming theatre, theatre of cruelty or theatre of exorcism. It may be the most violent music Crumb has written, but it's typical of the work he was producing in the 1970s, when his scores, swirling like vast spiral nebulas, resembled works of art, and when his music was characterised by an urgent need to crack open the stifling decorum of the concert hall by more or less theatrical means.

If that brute theatricality characterises much of Crumb's music of the time it's something to which he still feels strongly connected. "That's not something I resist. In other works I've suggested stage lighting, offstage effects like a glass harmonica, masks for the players. It does seem to be built in to works from that period."

I suspect that my best music came in that window of time, probably 1965 to 1975. My music since then hasn't changed fundamentally, although some new things have probably come into it but the music that is most played comes from that period. That was the best I did, I think."

There it is again, that matter-of-fact tone that barely allows room for regret. But perhaps I'm making too much of it. Certainly Crumb himself sees a continuity from that period to the present. I mention a description of his work by the critic Nicolas Slonimsky. "In his music, Crumb is a universalist. Nothing in the realm of sound is alien to him." Crumb is happy to concur. "I've been influenced by sounds that come from all kinds of different music and I've used instruments that maybe one doesn't associate with this kind of music: the hammered dulcimer, the harmonica, folk instruments, but also a lot of percussion instruments from Asia, Africa, South America. And then I've explored unconventional ways of using conventional instruments. That's been a thread running through my music, and it's still prominent in *Quest*, which calls for a harmonica or a concertina as well as saxophone, which is an instrument I've never used before."

For Crumb, that search for new possibilities through sound is a defining characteristic of 20th century composition, which for him is linked with a move away from the orchestra, the traditional cornerstone of classical music. "Maybe there are a few composers who haven't been touched by this, but the explosion in the area of timbre has been ongoing since the turn of the century, evolving as an element in music that is perhaps just as important as rhythm, melody, harmony. The combinations are infinite and unlimited. I produce of myself primarily as a chamber composer. It's always a strain for me to produce an orchestral work. Generally in our century the chamber dimension has been the typical thing while the orchestra is something of a hangover from the last century. There are pieces that seem to work well for the orchestra but they always seem like a special solution. I could point to Berio's *Sinfonia*, a couple of works by Boulez perhaps, Lutoslawski. It's partly an economic matter: the orchestra seems especially precarious financially but it's also the flexibility of the smaller ensemble in every respect, especially rhythmic and timbral exploration. I guess my vocal work enjoys the intimacy of the chamber situation, where a few instruments, even just a piano can represent a whole orchestra, especially with amplified sound."

For the past 30 years Crumb has taught at the University of Pennsylvania. He received the Pulitzer Prize in 1968 for his set of "four processions for orchestra" entitled *Echoes Of Time And The River*, and at one time or another he has had the full panoply of Fulbright, Rockefeller and Guggenheim grants and fellowships, to say nothing of a host of honorary degrees. He is certainly not a prophet without honour but he is at pains to insist that he is not an academic composer. "I hope I've been a maverick. To me 'maverick' implies all the things that I respect in Charles Ives's music, especially a sense of exploring. I don't like academic music. The universities in the United States, in some places at least, have created their own academic ways of looking at music, but then on the other hand it's possible not to have anything at all to do with a university and still have an academic view of music, just as it's possible to work in a university and not be so influenced by the need to maintain the respect of one's colleagues. In any case, it's something of a marriage of convenience that composers are in the universities in the first place."

"I hope I've been a maverick. To me maverick implies all the things that I respect in Charles Ives's music, especially a sense of exploring"

At one moment or another in our conversation it's possible to detect the mere hint that teaching might have got in the way of composing, but Crumb is not going to make a point of it. In any case it's clear that teaching gives him a perspective that might not be available if he spent all day, every day in his workshop. "We get a lot more foreign students these days, especially from Asia. Almost more foreign students than American students, who these days all want to become investment bankers. The Asian composers are bringing something distinct that feeds into the stock of possibilities, not just the instruments but the Asian concept of time. That's going to prove very interesting, but in the United States at the moment there's a kind of hesitation. I don't know whether it has to do with the approaching millennium and people waiting to see what's going to happen. Most of the decade periods seem to throb but in the States there's a feeling of suspended animation and it's very strange. There are certainly some talented composers around. Technically they're all very well trained, much more so than when I was that age."

When Crumb speaks of a "hesitation" in American music today is he only hearing a distant echo of his own silence? Or might the different concept of time he senses in Asian composers provide him with a means to break that silence? He's not the sort to spend his time wringing his hands at the agony of the artist; yet it's clear he feels there are things he hasn't said that he needs to find a way to say. In the meantime there is a distinguished body of Crumb's work that continues to offer new ways of listening. It may not be easy for the composer to accept, but perhaps that's enough. □

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some records

- Quest/Federica's Little Songs For Children/Night Music I (Bridge, performed by Speculum Musicae)*
- Songs, Drones And Refrains Of Death/Apparition/Little Suite For Christmas (Bridge, performed by Speculum Musicae)*
- Maikrokosmos Vols I & II (Koch/Schwann, performed by Christine Mothe)*
- Maikrokosmos Vols I & II Madrigals Books I-IV (BIS, performed by Musica Viva, Anne-Marie Muhle and others)*
- Black Angels (Nonesuch, performed by The Kronos Quartet)*



PHOTO DEAN BELCHER

Stefan Jaworzyn is an opinionated motor-mouth stalking the fringes of taboo culture. He is also one

the scum

"Thinking is always the negation of what we have immediately before us" — GWF Hegel, *Logic*, 1817

The scorching, ears-to-ashes guitar/drums onslaught of London's Ascension duo is currently the toast of noisecore's 'anti-community.' Their performances seem to burn a hole in the soul of anyone who catches them, not throwaway experiences. As an interviewer, their guitarist Stefan Jaworzyn (drummer Tony Irving is the other half) has a forbidding reputation for negative judgments and undeleted expletives. But it must be the informed accuracy of his scorn that riles his targets. In person, he is charm personified.

Jaworzyn describes himself as an 'avid consumer.' He publishes a mail-order catalogue (called SCUM LIST) covering irresponsible rock noise, free jazz and lo-fi. His pithy consumer-guidance remarks have become legendary among the list's adherents. He has also organised exploitation film festivals at London's Scala and Electric Cinema and published a sleaze-culture farzine, *Shock XPress* (a project that has resulted in three books). He now runs a label called Shock. First releases were by Cori, Nurse With Wound, Current 93 and New Zealand's seminal Dead C. The guiding line seems to be William Burroughs (a row of Burroughs's hardbacks line a shelf in Jaworzyn's East London home), B-culture anti-values and acid-punk disobedience — spiced with a wit sharp enough to be sociopathic.

"In Bradford of the 70s there was a flea-pit cinema where if you paid full price they'd let you in to see anything, even if you were underage," he tells me. "So I had this agreement with my mother: I wouldn't go to any sex films but I could see any horror or trash or exploitation or violence — every Sunday, going to this double bill. When I was 11 I saw *Easy Rider* and that kicked me into music and cinema and sleazy alternative culture at the same time."

Musically, Jaworzyn started with Hendrix (the Hendrix cult is now so well established it is hard to recall that before his commercial resurrection in 1990 Hendrix was routinely dismissed as "madho guitar rubbish" in 'advanced' music circles). In 1974, Coltrane's outrageous *Live In Seattle* was an unfruitful contact with jazz, though Jaworzyn respected its 'extremity.' Listening to Ornette Coleman during an acid trip led to a purchase of the *Live At The Golden Circle* albums from his fellow tripper. "But he also fogged me some dreadful stuff like Brand X which threw me off the trail, thinking maybe there's only two good jazz albums and all the rest is this fusion crap. In the early 80s I bought two Company albums. They seemed pretty far out."

"I always liked writing and criticism, particularly negative criticism," he continues. "What shaped me, to be honest, was the pre-punk NME. Charles Shaar Murray, Nick Kent, Ian McDonald, Max Bell — a whole bunch of those clowns, all of whom are horrible washed-up pseudo-celebrity farts now who make me sick. But at the time! There was that confrontational, wind-up aspect to it: the longest features and interviews were where they abused people!"

Initially inspired by Burroughs and Ginsberg, he started a 'useless' course in American literature at Sussex University but dropped out after a year. "It was the beginning of the end of the left in Britain. The anarchist president got fucked over completely. The writing was on the wall. It was the first of the Tory machinations to topple dissidence, then they applied it to the National Health and everything else."

Anyone committed to disseminating Burroughs and splatter movies will run up against the idiosyncrasies of official censorship. Jaworzyn attempted to supplement his 'exploitation' publications (fashionist tributes to David Cronenberg amid other provocations) with a mainstream response, but he couldn't find a publisher prepared to take a chance on his proposed and uncompromising collection of anti-censorship essays.

"The publishers wanted the 'big names', people who write about the movies as trivia. They didn't want the heavyweights. I wanted to pay the contributors a decent fee, get proper research done to address the problems that were really disturbing me: the moral backlash and the swing to the right. It came about after the Jamie Bulger trial. I couldn't believe the stuff I was reading in the newspapers. A big fucking nail in the coffin for Tony Blair for me was that he rewrote David Alton's censorship bill for him so it would go through parliament."

"Snuff films are not commercially available!" he continues, outraged. "Bill Clinton himself goes to watch some retarded guy get a lethal injection — what more of a snuff movie do you need? These moral panics distract people from what's happening politically. Throbbing Gristle and Whitehouse actually made extreme sex so banal and inane, they demystified it. I always looked on it as a dadaist confrontational art crack."

A rock autodidact, this confrontational spirit informs Jaworzyn's playing: every note choice seems to snarl at conformity (paradoxically, this can be very beautiful and Hendrix-like too). I relay a remark by the composer James Dillon, pointing out that Stefan's style of playing "is not easy to do." "I know it's not easy to do," he replies. "After an Ascension show I'm more exhausted than when I've had a fuck! But I have no idea whether I'm playing split sixths or inverted G-minor sevenths to the power of 666."

There are some who resent the incursion of Ascension's 'noise' into the holy temple of free improvisation. But along with Bill Fisel and Eugene Chadbourne, Jaworzyn has achieved one of the few really thought-through extensions of Derek Bailey's guitar aesthetic. Aided by John Zorn, whose Tzadik and Avant labels released Bailey's recent collusions with Jungle and Metal, he has helped Bailey rediscover volume and coherence (Derek's Incus label has just released a scabrous duel between Jaworzyn and saxophonist Alan Wilkinson, sarcastically titled *In A Sentimental Mood*).

"I prefer Derek's playing in the last two years to a lot of his 80s stuff, though there's some pretty scrunchy stuff earlier on, too. I've never listened to him and

half of **Ascension**, the world's most uncompromising free rock duo. Interview by Ben Watson

risers

thought I want to play like that I listen to some free guitarists and I think this arsehole has listened to too much Derek Bailey! My playing has come out of improvised rock."

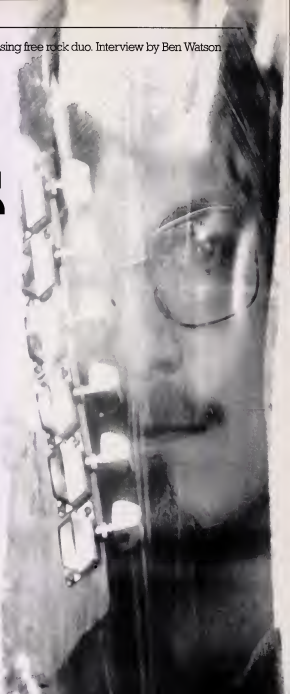
As a fellow refugee from the restrictions of pop/rock (what a Shock Inermote once described as "the shackles of Peggy Lee-descended dogshit"), Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore is a fan. Last April, Jaworzyn's Descension (Ascension plus improvisors Simon Fell and Charlie Wharf) caused a near-riot at the last night of Sonic Youth's sold-out residency at London's Forum. Watching this beautiful, jagged nose split the audience into warring camps felt like one of the great countercultural blows of the 90s. The tension generated was a real shot of creative adrenalin, much less collusive and jaded than more fitted avant garde events. Cans and glasses flew, drummer Tony Irving left his kit to battle with a missile-thrower, a full-blown Modern Music ruckus "Gee," said Thurston, rushing to the dressing room, "is that what seeing The Pistols was like?"

"A lot of people were offended, but it seems for different reasons, and a lot of people liked it, but again for different reasons. I really liked the low end for the first time I could actually shake the floor with the guitar. I think the combination of me grinding away at the bottom and Charlie really screaming on sax was really too much. There's nothing to get hold of for these idiots, who, even with Sonic Youth, are used to quite short pop songs. Sonic Youth give out friendly vibes as they play, they talk to the audience and stuff. We come across as a bunch of cantankerous old men who don't give a shit. And I am a cantankerous old man who doesn't give a shit. So why should I care a fuck what those stupid 17 year olds think?"

With Ascension and Descension, I suggest, music becomes objective. The listener faces something alien and inhuman, but the change it wreaks is social: a collective mutation of the cellular structure.

"A good Ascension concert does that to me. I'm no longer aware of how I'm playing or what I'm playing. A bad Ascension concert I feel self-conscious, I think, oh shit, that sounded too Baileyesque or something. With Broadcast (live radio transmissions recorded in the Bay Area of San Francisco and recently released by Shock as a superb double CD) every piece just took off. I never thought, am I repeating myself? What does this sound like? It just went."

In The Wire 153, Mark Sinker chastised Ascension for the sin of anti-commercial "intransigence." Actually, this is their great plus. For those who want music to express social refusal (rather than decorate the alternative tea-parlour), intransigence makes Ascension more accessible. More than any other group, their music demonstrates that the generic distinctions between the visceral pull of Varèse, Hindrix, Coltrane and The Pistols are divisions created by marketing. As the counterculture credentials of collusion come adrift in an ocean of meaningless soundtracks, Ascension is just the righteous blast we need. ☐ The SCUM LIST and Shock catalogue are available from 56 Beresford Road, London E4 6EF. Fax: 0181 559 3733



R. omic

2nd Entry (Scratch)

Jan 20 1997

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U.S. Program for Environmental Data Acquisition System (U.S. P.E.D.A.S.)

40 Environmental Data Acquisition System (U.S. P.E.D.A.S.)

Sample 1 - 100 (Scratch)

SCRATCH

Born in Gifu, Japan in 1966, Ryoji Ikeda is one of a generation of Japanese musical experimenters whose music is simultaneously global in its style and concerns yet also indebted to the specifics of his local culture. Groups such as Fushimushi are seen as extending the sound of Western psychedelia while submerging it in a peculiarly Japanese theatrical angst. The cathartic noise therapy of Masami Akita (Merzbow) may win fans across the globe, but its violent extremity is in part a reaction to Japan's exceptional social conservatism, as well as an outgrowth of a culture-specific fascination with brutal sexuality.

Ikeda's music is most notable for its ascetic electronic minimalism: pure tones and simple rhythms are frequently its only ingredients. The music has a lot in common with European sound explorers such as Thomas Köner, Bernhard Günter or Panasonic. Köner's evanescent clouds of sound find an echo in the multi-layered ambience of Ikeda's fragile "Luxus" (on 1000 Fragments, released on Ikeda's CCI Recordings). They

A love of architecture's ability to shape space in both concrete and subtle ways is evident from last year's installation in a Tokyo subway station. "The Hakubutsukan-Daibutsuen station is one of the oldest underground stations in Tokyo," Ikeda explains. "It has very rich reverberations. I installed speakers on one side of the platform, and Christophe Charles installed some on the other side. We blended sounds with each other. I used continuous sine waves, and he used very delicate signal and noise. Unfortunately I was out of Japan when it played, so I honestly don't know how good the result was, but the test was very successful."

Asked to suggest further inspirations, Ikeda expressly disavows any connection to well-known musical Minimalists such as La Monte Young, instead saying that "architects or minimalist artists (not musicians) may influence me a little." He mentions among others the painter Robert Rymen, whose all-white canvases might at first seem obviously analogous to Ikeda's frequent use of pure electronic tones. Rymen's paintings, however, highlight the brush strokes that

more accessible Techno forays too. "The next release from CCI Recordings will be the first album of The CCI Sound System. It will be a deconstructed of all my music... a dub/Techno/Jungle-influenced self-remix."

All these strands highlight the border area in which Ikeda's music operates. Listening to both 1000 Fragments and +/- is like taking a journey outside culture. The way to deal with information overload isn't to retreat towards the pastoral fictions beloved of much Ambient music, but to find solace and repose in the gaps in the signal. These albums shift from media collage and rhythm into oscillating serenity, an escape from signal into noise. □ +/- is out now on Touch (through Klados/Pinnacles). Night Passage (Demixed) is out on Doraba (through Impetus). Ikeda and CCI Sound System also appear on the Indium label's new Atomic Weight compilation (through Impetus). 1000 Fragments is available in the UK via Touch. CCI Recordings contact: Sewu Building 3F, 4-7-6 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan.

PHOTO: KENJI KUROKAWA

headphonaut

Tones, frequencies, pulses: the pure ingredients in the austere soundworlds erected by Japanese composer **Ryoji Ikeda**. Interview by Brian Duguid

also bear comparison to the attenuated drones of Ikeda's recent remix of the Australian sound artist Alan Lamb on *Night Passage* (Demixed). Günter's barely audible clicks, buzzes and pops, the usually unwanted interruptions from recording technology, also appear in even Ikeda's most serenely minimalist pieces, while Panasonic's attempt to turn Techno into a science of pure frequencies and rhythms finds a cousin in Ikeda's "Headphonics" from his new album +/-.

Ikeda says, "Unfortunately I am not very familiar with Japanese musicians. I am completely isolated here." It's difficult, however, not to see something specifically Japanese in his music. Not all his music is of the minimalist variety. 1000 Fragments also documents several experiments with Techno beats and media collage (also shortly to be the basis of his third album, on the Staalplaat label). It's tempting to see these as reflective of his media-saturated society with the more minimalist pieces as a Zen-inspired retreat from the hubbub. Ikeda, however, resists all such comparisons. Asked what he finds so attractive about a pure electronic sine tone he will only offer "its beauty."

The famous dictum of architect Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe, "less is more", is a clear and acknowledged inspiration for his music. Mies Van Der Rohe's architecture was devoted to simple, modern materials and regular, repetitive geometry. Ikeda likewise finds beauty in a music stripped down to its bare essentials

composed them, with the painter admitting to being something of a romantic. Even when Ikeda's music seems at its most simple, just one or two tones stretching into the distance, the sense of revolve provoked by minute variations echoes Rymen's romantic streak.

If the serenity of Ikeda's tone-drone music is refreshing for being so utterly straightforward, he's more than happy to branch out. Much of +/- reads like a binary translation of hexadecimally encoded Trance Techno. Some tracks take very simple pulsating rhythms, with careful, gradual variation still somehow sufficient to retain interest. Other pieces play out the same drama at high speed, the pulsations translated into layered, drifting frequencies. It's gloriously hermetic, although Ikeda plans





Fade in Reindeer on the streets of Sheffield: real flesh and blood reindeer, branches sprouting from their heads. A trad jazz trio materializing in and out of the crowded streets tooting Christmas tunes for the throng of happy shoppers. Music pumping from shopfronts, building sites, churches. This ain't no industrial hole: this is Disneyland.

Fade left. This is where Autechre live: the road out of town, shops fogging dodgy electronics, Boatworld. Past nosy builders, iron steps, door double locked for protection. Sean Booth, grinning, brewing up, Rob Brown mucking around in Photoshop. Conversation evolves, slowly, sprinkled by a gurgling montage from Miami. For the past year and a half, this small room in Booth's flat has been the hub of Sean and Rob's daily life. It's here they crunch sounds around, burn tracks, absorb music from all the tapes, discs and vinyl they collect or receive, banter and smoke with whichever friends and associates drop by. The tools in this genial workshop are on display: assorted keyboards old and new; a mixing desk's studded plateau; Apple Mac; devices apparently cadged from the army; a battered autochanger turntable used on a Kineshesia remix for Rephlex ("That Grundig's fuckin' hardcore", says Sean when I spill water on it). On this array of electronic components the pair recorded their fourth album, *Chiasmic Slide*, the title a cryptic reference to the mercurial qualities of the crossfader. On the DJ panel or the mixing board, this little

entertainments, rides, and restaurants. The daily grand parade seems to come from nowhere, fill the central plaza with dancing and music, and then simply disappear. The parade's apparently effortless, "magical" appearance and disappearance is central to its overall effect." — Bruce C. Caron, "Magic Kingdoms in The Sacred Mountains Of Asia"

Fade left "Autechre's pretty cool, innit?" says Sean with a smirk. "It's got it's place. We like to dissect things, definitely. I think the trick is not to let the detail become the main..."

"Attraction," says Rob, picking up the baton. "We just enjoy doing that so much. I think we're both very easily distracted, and we'll just keep moving from one element of the track to the next until we can't do any more. We throw things in that are like cars with square wheels."

"It's pretty extreme sometimes," says Sean. "It does get to the point where you're like, how far can we take this? And it's something that most people would think was totally finite, but we always manage to squeeze something out of it. All the best tracks that we hear are the sort of tracks that tweak you, by almost distracting you when you're listening to a part of it, and then something happens and you're forced to move around within the track."

Rob: "You're forced to focus on different levels."

The pair's involvement in the Manchester HipHop/tagging community in the late 80s

Via their releases on Sheffield's Warp label, the **Autechre** duo of Sean Booth and Rob Brown are searching out new dimensions in electronic sound. Meanwhile, their *Disengage* radio show has become a community news bulletin for fellow digital denizens. Interview by Rob Young

transformed by sound

slider acts as the magician's curtain, switching from side to side to reveal marvels previously hidden. Only now, the way Autechre have engineered things, the curtains have multiplied, there are boxes within boxes, screens hiding screens hiding screens. *Chiasmic Slide* harbours a maelstrom of fizzing detail, smudgy beats, shredded pulses, church organ, toxic noise hurtling towards the end of its half-life, pumice stones rubbed across the skull. Autechre and sound can't keep their hands off each other.

Fade right "Disney-alty" is crafted by hiding the mechanical, electrical, and labour-intensive production of the

has been well documented (including an honorary mention in the Manchester Constabulary's files, allegedly), and the influence of HipHop — its ninja aesthetics, on-the-fly tactics, insistent transformations — remains pervasive.

"The whole idea of transforming sound is HipHop, to us anyway," says Sean. "Taking something that almost already exists, and doing something fresh with it, fucking it over and doing something new, taking it somewhere that we'd like it to be. Rather than the emphasis on it being different for the sake of it, it's more that it's different because we're different. We allow the fact that we don't quite fit in to be a positive thing."

"It's about sleight of hand, where you're revealing things and then pulling them back. It's that sort of dynamic. But I think that's HipHop: the whole attitude of wanting to do people's heads in a little bit but also give them something that they'll really appreciate comes from that — Maroon 5 to early Bomb Squad — where there were little tricks in there, and you knew the producer had stuck them in there because he knew it would do people's heads in. And it'd be like, fucking hell, how did he do that? Or, that's a totally mad thing to do with your track. But it didn't suffer because it wasn't..."

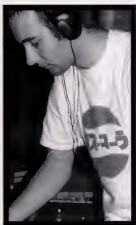
Rob: "Wasn't a showcase for those ideas."

Sean: "It was part of the flow and it worked. That's it really. That's how we've started describing it now."



Fade right "Detailed modern maps exist for all the spaces and machinery above and below ground at all the Disney parks. These are reserved only for the eyes of those who engineer the Disney magic... Above ground, the pathways within the 'Kingdom' have a centripetal, Maelius effect, always bringing the visitor back from the edge to the centre... The entire park feels much larger than it 'really' is (no scale is provided on the map!) — Bruce C. Caron, "Magic Kingdoms"

Fade left In the conventional language of music there are few maps to guide the listener around the textural chasms and plateaux of a sound such as



Autechre's. It's not that it's intangible, because it seems to reach into your mental machinery and turn cogs that have lain unused since the dawn of evolution. But in the manner of all sound that inspires awe through immense, alien beauty, from A/M/M to Brian Ferneyhough to Sean's current favourite Tod Dockstader, there are few fixed stars to guide you through its universe. Track tries are a kind of refracted technical English ("Retic Ac", "Cichil", "Recury").

Oled rhythms run like clockwork, but slyly shift gear on "Caper" as a tense breakbeat shuffles into 3/4 swingtime before you've realised it's happened. "Caltric" tricks the brain into thinking it's speeding up imperceptibly across four minutes. "Tewe" is a jungle of bleached, dry wood, the flesh of drum 'n' bass stripped down to its tree of nerves. Throughout, Rob and Sean shepherd their sonic flocking patterns with increasing confidence.

"I think a lot of people, when they're constructing complex music, have this idea that for something maddeningly complex to change into something else that's maddeningly complex you've got to do it suddenly," says Sean. "But there are millions of ways you can do it, because you can have your entire track changing piece by piece as it rotates, and that's what we're into. We like things like a puzzle where it's revealing itself and changing. And you can almost follow it, because it works the same pace as your brain works. The trick is not to get it to work faster

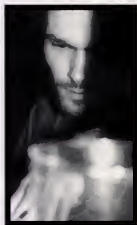
or slower, but to get it in tune with yourself. And obviously there are some people who work faster than that, and they'll hear it and think this is boring, and there are people who work slower than that, and they'll think this is too much. For us it's the right pace."

Meeting Rob and Sean, you get the impression that they are rarely idle. Their first album, 1993's *homonobis*, was a distillation of the tracks they had produced over the previous two years, at the same time, they'd been DJing on a Manchester pirate radio rig. They still have a regular weekly broadcast, but now it's strictly legal: their *Deepspace* show which goes out live in the wee small hours of Sunday mornings on Manchester's Kiss 102. They treat this two-hour window like a regular bulletin to their followers, friends or random tuners (one night, apparently, the show commanded 100 per cent of the area's listenership). "It turned out we managed to get total creative

freedom," says Rob. "It's just so awesome because it's a direct link to people's thought. It's first hand, without having to go through someone's filtration system."

"It's like doing a tape for shiftdoos of people," adds Sean. "They don't see it as being any more than that, either, don't see it as being a new release or anything — none of that judgmental crap comes into it."

The duo evidently treasure the construction of dense, personal links with kindred spirits, and during the conversation we listen to various metapops that have reached them via friends and muscians — "proper labcoat stuff!" Sean calls it. Remaining at ground level and in touch with their audience is their way of keeping ahead of the



game — a hefty preoccupation in a climate where, as they put it, "there's shiftdoos happening and it's way under the surface". Wider audience reaction doesn't enter into the equation. "You don't want to think about the way it's going to affect other people, but you do because there's that element of wanting to get inside people's heads and fuck around with them," says Sean.

They hint at a brief period of crisis, around the time of 1994's *Amber*. "We went through a really annoying phase a couple of years ago," recalls Rob. "It was like this: it's!"

"Is that all there is to learn, do you know what I mean?" adds Sean. "But that's wrong, obviously. You basically have to come right out of yourself and realise what it is that drives you in other people's music and in your

own music. There's obviously learning, but you've also got to allow for the discovery of new things even if you might not be prepared to acknowledge that they exist, and new tricks will become evident. No matter how much you think you've learnt, you can't have learnt everything. That's what we've realised now. We listen to a lot of our new stuff and it seems to be coming from somewhere other than what we can understand. That's probably why it seems slightly magical, I suppose. It does to us, in a childish sort of way."

"We listen to a lot of our new stuff and it seems to be coming from somewhere other than what we can understand. That's probably why it seems slightly magical, in a childish sort of way"

Fade right "Far from the violence of the Tri Repetitor, Ae as Gescom combined forces with the super-Ambient

sophie and franz, to provide about 1.5 hours of total head food. Gescom's subtle beats and rhythms empowered the ambience suggested by sophie and franz's organic sounds, sliding sand, echoed and filtered whistles, hand claps and weather reports. The set was one continuous piece that had the whole crowd unconsciously screaming for more!" — From IDM newsgroup, www.hyperreal.com, April 1996

Fade left For an outfit that claims, "We literally spend all our time up here in this room", Autechre are surprisingly well-travelled. A comprehensive tour of the UK's less salubrious indie backrooms in 1995 laid the groundwork for longer jaunts around the USA and Europe last year, by which time their sets had become fully improvised affairs, unsequenced and unprepared. They also found time to link up with Ben Ponton of Newcastle's zovietfrance for a couple of low-key but highly rated

collaborative performances. The experience changed them. "I don't think [Zowiefrance] are afraid of anything when they're in front of their equipment and there's an audience," says Rob. "Even if something went wrong they'd totally exploit it."

Sean was impressed by the ease with which the Newcastle alchemists were fusing elements of free improvisation and electronic manipulation. "They've got such a clue about composition and when to do things, it's almost totally based on instinct. It's almost like gamelan: they just feel that it's all in there and all you've got to do is tap it, get the timing right and bring it out in front of people. Whether it was good or bad doesn't matter. We just came back and felt different. It was like somebody giving us license to basically do all the things we'd wanted to do."

There are still technical limitations when they play live, but they're more enlightened about ways of getting round them. "It's just like DJing," explains Sean, "but with 30 tracks and FX and all the other shit that we've got up there. But you couldn't really write your next drum pattern while you're present one was running, which is where we want to get."

"We could if we had different equipment," Rob amplifies. "But we opted for a really simple approach to the set-up we had on stage, but gave everything so many branches of branches of branches, you could virtually reshape the structure of what we were doing as long as we put enough there in the first place. What I'm trying to say is, we have so many loops all nooching around, if you know what you want in a certain place you just select it from a certain area of a certain loop, and you're thinking about maybe five or six of these simultaneously. You've got a really amorphous set-up."

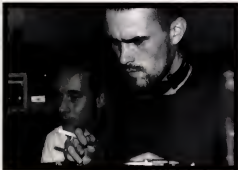
"And we don't talk to each other any more," says Sean, "which is well smart. We're pretty on it, aren't we? I'm really into live stuff because it's the only time when you're subconsciously trying to make the track go the right way — that keeps us in sync. It's like DJing times 100, because there are so many options, so many ways you can take it just from your small area of work. People think that because it's electronic it has to be as tight as you can get it. It's not the point at all. The point of the electronics is just to give yourself extra pairs of hands so that you can do more than you can do with your own hands. And you should still be doing the maximum that you can do. Otherwise there's no point in being there you might as well send a fucking disk down."

It's refreshing to hear him say this, at the end of a year that was — how to put it? — trumped by the anal fraternity. Anal, that's the word frequently employed by musicians such as Richard James, Tom Jenkinson, Mike Paradinas and Luke Vibert to describe the painstaking programming of micro-indecents — beats, fernts, slurps, squeaks, you name it. While the process undoubtedly created some of 1996's most dazzling records, it threatened to push the content and representation of the music into a land of playground humour, fart-gag aesthetic, culminating in Aphex Twin's farcical *autnehrk* from the *mlkrmn's wtf's tss* Benny Hill update on his 'GrlBoy' EP. *Autnehrk* are by their own admission and to the max, and reverend Richard James as "the most state of the art musical scientist there is". Yet they are searching for ways to incorporate complexity into a broader vision of self-transformation.

"We totally love and respect what he does and respect him," says Sean, "but it's different to what we do, because he doesn't allow his soul to show through as much. I think there's not enough emotion in music at the moment. There's a lot of people out

there who are making music that I think is absolutely stunning technically, except for the fact that the emotion's been somehow lost in the process. A lot of people are getting on a complex tip, but I think they've kind of forgotten where it all came from, the reason why they wanted to make music in the first place goes out the window. It's that scientific approach: it's knowing you can do things, and that knowledge that you're capable of producing certain results is actually really negative, because it makes you forget that you have to discover things still."

"Feelings are cheesy, when you break it down," he goes on. "I think people see feelings, or emotion, honesty or integrity as being cheesy things. That's probably quite a high contributing factor to this."



Fade right I meet Autnehrk on the 13th of the month. On the way, I purchase items in a chemist amounting to £13.13. The last track on *Chasitic Slide*, which I listen to on the train, clocks in at 13'13. My hotel room is 113. In the evening, at Warp's Christmas party in Sheffield's Music Factory, I'm handed ticket number 131 at the cloakroom.

Fade left There are codes, messages and private jokes encrypted in their music, they tell me, but they won't talk specifics. I say I think what they do best is make tiny tweaks rather than grand gestures, except they make the tweaks in unexpected directions to achieve

maximum effect. Even the secreted (their word) language of their track titles softens the hard-consonant Ks, Qs and Zs of phuture-speak into Celtic-sounding vowels: "Daer", "Tewe", "Pule", "Nuane". Their vision of the UK's political future is bleak, to say the least, and leads them into bitter silence. Yet their imaginative future, the one they are constructing in this little square room, is more optimistic than the Thatcher generation's Dark Age visions of net police, 24-7 surveillance and Euro-conspiracy.

"It's just started, late this century, there's a quest for something," says Sean. "God knows what it is. Quite a lot of people have started to come full circle, and — maybe it's because of the key configuration we use at the moment — they're starting to resort to what was considered to be music three or four hundred years ago. You're almost programmed to believe that's the absolute. I think that's dangerous. I mean people who are going back to a classical approach, where things get a bit more technical and a bit more considered, and almost completely step-time programmed. It's completely to do with control, and very scientific and cold. Instinct isn't chaos, for us anyway. I think it's what most other animals rely on, and we've forgotten how to. More ancient music is the way we want to go. It'd be nice to get to the year dot. I think that's the whole point really to find out exactly where it came from, because once you've found the base, you can explore new territory."

Fade right Embedded in the fabric of the south wall of Sheffield Cathedral a complete set of standard measures picked out in the city's steel, from the medieval rod and perch right up to the European metre, calibrated correct at zero degrees centigrade.

Fade left "Make them think what you want them to think," Sean is saying as I switch off my tape recorder. "It isn't for any other reason than you'd think they'd enjoy thinking it." □ *Chasitic Slide* and a single, *Envane*, are out this month on Warp (through RPM/DISC).

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THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND

The music released on the **No U Turn** label is carrying breakbeat culture deep into the realms of extreme noise terror. Will Montgomery meets the label's irrepressible owner, **Nico Sykes**

The dark rings of 12" vinyl which emerged from the No U Turn studio in 1996 described uncompromising slabs of sound, shiny digital noise machines that spawned a hundred imitators. Laden with drones and snister sampled snippets, the tracks became mini-soundtracks of fear, riding on a suspension of fuzzed bass. They hit where it hurts, and it felt good.

"I call them 'hall-records'," says engineer and label founder Nico Sykes. "It only comes right when a DJ gets two of these things and blends them together the right way. When you buy the record you're buying a tool, a little capsule of charge to bring in at the right time. Some DJs get it right and others don't. But as finished records on their own I'd say they were a bit sparse. They are naughty though! And I swear this music is on the edge."

'Charge', 'buzz', 'enchantment' such words recur frequently in Nico's conversation. Perhaps the most thrilling of these grime-encrusted missives was "Droid", a collaboration between Nico and both of his main associates in that shadowy sub-sector of breakbeat culture known as Techstep. Trace and Ed Rush: It flirled with the nastiness of noise, as swirling washes of malevolent electronic sounds welled up to the surface of the mix again and again.

"There are a lot of times I say this isn't music, this is a good racket, a good noise, this is exciting. Whatever it is it might pin you to the floor in shock and horror. I'm a big Phil Spector fan and I think a lot of things that made those records very big was not just the music and the great songs and everything, it was this very serious attitude to how things could be balanced, just to sound itself."

No U Turn's trademark hovering bass noise — made with "attitude and a distortion pedal" — is now ubiquitous. But not many of the imitators achieve the purity of the No U Turn house sound. Take a track like "Input" by the 18 year old DJ Fierce: it pummels the ears with the simplicity of its weight. Sykes backs up his belief in a truly DJ-centred music with a serious studio background. He started working in recording studios 12 years ago as a teenager. He worked with all sorts of conventional rock groups (witnessing, incidentally, the arrival of the sequencing package Cubase), before chucking it in, bored with the slowness of BDs technology. He then headed off on a bizarre sequence of travels which included a job catching crocodiles in Zimbabwe. Back in London again trapping skills were of little use, but a burgeoning interest in an emergent hardcore club music was fired by the enthusiasms of near neighbour Ed Rush (most of the people connected with No U Turn come from within a few hundred yards of each other in Barnes, South West London).

"I had a flat and a sampler and this guy Ed Rush was coming round playing me these great HipHop records and then what I thought were really awful nasty noises. They were very fat. He was about 18 or something and the excitement on his face when he put the needle onto these records — I didn't see anyone else like that in the rock world or the House world. The real reality was coming from people who were into this very, very weird kind of thing."

The duo began making records together, really hitting form in late 1992 with the colossal "Bluddot Antattack". It still sounds great today. Their sharp take on the unsettling combination of paranoia and euphoria typical of so much drum 'n' bass became a blueprint for what was to follow on the No U Turn. Next step, four years ago, was borrowing some cash and setting up the No U Turn studio, a bare room in an Acton industrial estate which Sykes got a friend to spray with graffiti-style murals.

"I'd never set up a studio before but I could see the environment was to be focused around two record decks for a start, which you don't find in any studio. It just seemed to me that we could set this room up where people who were really into this mixing thing could come in and we could make one of these records. It's so quick. I like being in this room where we could be halfway through a mix and someone's coming back into the room with what we've done a few hours earlier on a bit of plastic and putting it in the mix with what we're now making. It's fresh and it's fast."

The idea that 'communication skills' might have something to do with making great drum 'n' bass records might sound strange, but Sykes is convinced that being sensitive to his collaborators' ideas is vital to the way he works. This has nothing to do with cheesy music be bonhomie and everything to do with knowing how to extract the noises going round in peoples' heads.

"What I reckon I do that a lot of guys do is that I sit here with a DJ and I understand where DJs are coming from. I don't feel this bug the DJs feel to do with blinding records. I don't get that hit. But I appreciate there are

guys who really do. I mean having an immense amount of patience from my point of view. When we made "Squadron" I wanted to throw Trace out of the window. I broke two of my chairs. I threw out 100 records into a skip. I mitted some. I broke a fader on the desk. I really was wound up. You would be so if you listened to that for ten hours long. It's about that incredible state of tension."

"I'm a big Phil Spector fan and I think what made those records big was not just the music and the great songs but this very serious attitude to how things could be balanced, to sound itself"

In the prologue may be work utilising real-time musicians. Sykes has also been travelling to Germany a lot, bugged by the possibility of a meeting point between Techno and drum 'n' bass. But for now he is observing the progress of the No U Turn

CD Torque, an odd format perhaps for those light-shunning sounds so suited to vinyl. 45s. Unlike many breakbeat compilations, however, there's a real congruence to the release, thanks to the strength of the in-house sound. All the tracks seem to live in the same so-future-present, shuttling between intense utopian and dystopian charges.

"It's fear of the future, you know this whole feeling of 'Where the fuck are we?' Everyone's lost when it comes to the tech and that fear of not knowing what gear you should buy. Everyone's on edge about it. It is like some new animal that's just turned up and it's evolving so much quicker than what we're used to."

"I got excited when I think of what's coming to the table — what's being cooked up in bedrooms around the place. Like it or not this time next year there's going to be ten really great records. Are they going to be coming from the big names? I don't think so. It's going to be two kids in Chelmsford. These accidents are gonna happen all over the place." □ Torque is released this month (through SRO)



distortion



invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...

The Orb's Alex Paterson

Tested by Mike Barnes

Alex Paterson's first brushes with the music industry were relatively un auspicious. A spell as a drum roader for Killing Joke was followed by an A&R job at their label EG in the early 90s. Evidence of Paterson's creativity began with The Orb's birth in late 1988 when he and Jim Cauty produced "The Kiss EP", a mash-up of samples culled from New York's KISS FM radio station. The duo then landed a DJ residency in the chill out room at Paul Oakenfold's Land of Oz club at Heaven, London. The eclectic, beatless collages that would greet exhausted club-goers effectively spawned a new genre, Ambient House. After the innovative samplerella of "A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain That Rules From The Centre Of The Ultraworld" in 1989, Cauty left to work with Bill Drummond in The KLF. The Orb then ostensibly became a collaborative unit based around Paterson. Youth, Paterson's former employer in Killing Joke, joined briefly for the third single "Little Fluffy Clouds" and the debut album *The Orb's Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld* (91), which also featured Krs Thra\$ta, Weston, Thomas Fehlmann and two ex-members of Gong, Steve Hillage and Hazelette Gaudy. The track "Backside Of The Moon" was typical of Paterson's irreverent sense of humour. The second album

was a remix extravaganza, *Autrey Mixes: The Ultraworld Excursions*, followed by a single "The Blue Room" which clocked in at just under 40 minutes. Hefty commercial success followed with the (U)Orb album (92) which captured a huge rock/dance/Ambient crossover audience without compromise. Nick Burton and Simon Phillips joined in time to be captured at various shows on the album *Live 93*. The resolutely uncommercial *Pumme Fritz* (94) barely broke the momentum. Orbivus Terrarum released the next year was the album that broke the group in the US. An important sideline for Paterson came in 94 when he, Weston and Fehlmann collaborated with guitarist Robert Fripp on the *FFWD* album. Weston departed and Paterson, Andy Phillips and Fehlmann put together the new album *Orbivision*. The title demonstrates that Paterson's capacity for bad puns is virtually inexhaustible. The Orb's rema work is massive, taking in all points between The Cranberries and Mindless Drug Hoover, and Paterson is still actively DJing, which he refers to as his "recreation". The interview took place at Island Records' London HQ. Paterson was suffering from a mixture of jet-lag and party-lag which he attempted to rectify with a pre-Jukebox herbal liverer.

TONTO'S EXPANDING HEAD BAND

"Jetset" from *Tonto Rides Again* (Viceroy Vintage)
It sounds like it's German, Kraftwerk-influenced. Is it?

It's actually Tonto's Expanding Head Band from the early 70s. Have you heard them?

No I was never into stuff like Tangerine Dream. People always think I was. The first record I ever bought was Electric Womans by T Rex, then in the Court Of The Crimson King and then *Stearns And Bible Black* [both by King Crimson]. I was only 11 or 12. I liked Alice Cooper as well. Then I got into dub, then punk, with The Pistols and The Clash, but when The Clash put out their second album [*Give 'Em Enough Rope*] I thought it was the biggest pile of shit I'd ever heard. I think one of the best albums that ever came out was *White Noise* [David Vorhaus's pre-sampling Electronica classic from 69].

Coincidentally, *Pinkish Cecil*, who was one half of Tonto, produced Steve Hillage's *Motivation Audio*.

Steve Hillage? Who's he? It's through working with Killing Joke and then going to work over in Conny Plank's studio in Düsseldorf that brought those connections together. And being a DJ I did with Clash recently. To be in your 50s and doing what they're doing still is something I can look up to and know that I could achieve stuff in 20 years' time

shows very much in The Orb in that sense, even now. The rhythm, it's such a brilliant rhythm, reggae. And the space, probably. It's intuitive in that sense, it's not something you think about.



FRIPP & ENO
"Healthy Colours I-IV"
from *The Essential Fripp & Eno* (EG)

This is annoying actually. I know it. Phomp! Next. That's why I don't go on TV, actually — I'm too slow

When people ask me questions, I get them about three weeks later. Well you can put me out of misery, but I'll listen to it. It should be very obvious.

It's Fripp and Eno. I think it was recorded a bit before you worked at EG. It was on *The Essential Fripp & Eno* compilation.

I've got it, yeah. That's that guitar that was really annoying. It makes more sense now, because we've done a Fripp album, *FWO*, and I knew the guitars he was doing are a lot better than those guitars there, that are just picking. I think I've listened to this once, actually it's not as good as it should have been. "The Heavenly [Music] Corporation" from *No Pussybooting* — This doesn't compare to that, I'm afraid to say. I've only listened to it once or twice myself.

If you put that in the interview as well as what I said, that's fine, I'm happy with that, then you can take just as much of the burnt. When you first put it on I thought it was someone trying to copy Art Of Noise really badly and then it dawned on me that I knew it. It's a bit Talking Heads-ish. But Robert Toppus Bananarius. It was like a dream working with him. I got to know him so well at EG anyway. I was the only one he could come and talk to about music, which I thought was quite a compliment. And he took it as far as to come and do a project with us. I'd like to do another album with him [Adopts Fripp's Dorset burr] 'All right! Boy?' No, he's a lovely man.

How did he approach the *FWO* project?

With a very open mind to what we were doing, whatever we were doing. He just gave us what went into his head and we turned various little loops into tracks. We actually started off with the idea of him doing it live and us putting noises and effects over things live. I've got over 70 minutes of these live outtakes we were doing in the studio in Devon — Dorset, sorry. We thought, 'This is really good', so we went into a big studio and did it and the outcome was to be the best Orb-related album we've ever done, including *Orb* as well.

"The Heavenly Music Corporation" is one of my favourite tracks ever for playing out. In Ambient rooms you can put so much underneath it or around it. It's a bit like [Steve Hillage's] *Rainbow Dome Music*, which was the connection between him and Steve. He heard me playing it out, I never knew who he was. I was a punk in 77. I decided then never to have any more heroes [Referring to the track's juddering, speeded-up voice]

That! That's the sort of thing we used when we used to do our Sunday afternoon experience at Transcendental when we'd been up all night. With our noses [Alex rocks his head back activating an imaginary sampler]. I wonder if Brian Eno could DJ? That would be an interesting experience. It's interesting to do it. You're on one-to-one with people. They come and talk to you — if they don't do it they'll tell you. I've had that loads of times, especially in Ambient rooms, because people come in really rowdy from the dance rooms. "Whieeeehhhhh. Got anything we can dance to, mate? [Mutters] Fuck off. Get in the other room."

VIVIAN STANSHALL

"Rawlins End Part 37: An Entrance Of Trousers" from *John Peel radio session*

[After a few chuckles] Well I can say quite safely I haven't the faintest idea.

It's Vivian Stanshall from a 1978 John Peel session.

That's? Excellent. Have you ever read [Clive Kings] *The Lord Of Green Ginger*, the follow-on to *Aladdin's Lamps*? I got to do you that one day. Have you got any kids? Well maybe you're a big kid anyway. Loads of mates of mine have got kids. I make them up little nursery songs, put music underneath. There are some very odd characters in there. Ben Nag Nag, Thud. There Bonk or something. And magic carpets.

As you said, there's a lot of whimsical humour in The Orb, which is what made me play you some Vivian Stanshall. I thought you might have heard his stuff.

Probably round people's houses, other people's records, my brother more than anybody else. Anyway you thought you'd get me and you did. Well done! [Claps] I'm only good at reggae, you know that anyway, fuckin' hell. The only thing I listen to at home is reggae. Really? I've got stacks of it.

There are a lot of spoken word samples on the new record. Where do they come from?

I can't tell you where they come from or I'll get into trouble. You have to cover your tracks. It's where the voice doesn't sound like the original voice, or maybe out the words up — just taking different words to become... there's all different ways round it. I suppose it's just how much time you want to spend on the spoken word and what relevance it's going to have to the track.

How actively do you look out for speech samples for your records? There's one rant about barcodes and the apocalypse on "S.A.L.L.I.".

That's taken directly from a film which we actually had permission to use [Mike Leigh's] *Naked*. That's David Thewlis. He's talking to a security guard about the end and everything. I played that out on Saturday night. People were stunned by it because a lot of people hadn't heard it.

They come along. It's like the thought of doing another Orb album at the moment is quite [laughes] I need to think about it for six months before I start to actually get going on it. But we've got an idea of what we're going to do already. We're going to try and do some film music.



KING TUBBY & THE AGGROVATORS

"Dub Fi Gwan" from *Dub Gone Crazy* (Blood And Fire)

Almost like "Jammies" by Bob Marley, but I know it isn't. It's earlier than that for

sure but it's got the same intro. Do you want me to guess who this is then? [Alex dabs his hands and rubs them together] Who knows? It's a bit out of context after Tonto's Expanding Head Band. It's really obvious. I know this tune like the back of my hand. It's a toss-up between Scientist and King Tubby.

King Tubby, with The Aggrovators laying down the rhythms.

From 1977? It's not really got that 70s feel because it hasn't got enough brass on it. The early Aggrovators he did with The Revolutionaries as well. It sounded a lot like Culture without the vocals and that brass section — I think that's what's lacking on here. Because it's dub they've taken the brass out. But it's lovely bass, which could be the man himself, Robbie Shakespeare. It could be him or [Flavia] Holt. [It is Shakespeare's] Holt came in 78 or 79. There's loads of vocal takes of this as well. [Looks at the CD] The track was produced by Bunny Lee. That would be those mad little drum scurrying noises — he was a drummer.

You were saying that dub was an early influence. What did you particularly like about it?

The speed, the fact that the bass and drums were to the fore as opposed to the guitar and vocals. That

invisible jukebox



BILL LASWELL "Wind" from *Oscillations* (Sub Rosa)

[Before the track starts] Are you going to put Killing Joke demos on? You've got something worse instead? I always used to

come bottom of the class anyway so there's no surprises here for me. [Track starts] Do you want a first impression? It's a bit like one of those North American Indian albums of flutes that come in gradually. I've got a few albums of North American Indian music. But this is synthetic as well. It's got all the Ambient noises and bird noises. But that's my first impression. I do like some of that stuff, natural Indian stuff. [At this point the breakfasts kick in. Alex laughs] Hm, I was just thinking it was going to be someone really electronic doing an Ambient beginning. Yeah. Mad, brilliant.

The bass is playing live, and it's the bass player's record, which might be a slight clue.

Slight clue? Don't like the bass part but I like the drums [Laughs and rocks back in chair] I'm not even going to say it, I'll keep my mouth well shut. The names that go through my head now are unbelievable.

It's Bill Laswell, a drum 'n' bass album that came out last year on Sub Rosa.

Sub Rosa? I've been trying to get all of Bill Laswell's records out of island. It's weird because I'm being asked loads of things about music and to be honest, in the last year and a half all I've been doing has been thinking Orb. This is really nice, the loops are brilliant. I can see where they're coming from but the bass is in a completely different hole. It doesn't sit, it's not right in there for me. But that's unfortunate. That's just my feeling, and honesty is the best policy.

I see you've got a track on Laswell's new *Autism* dub compilation.

We took it as a complete joke at the time. We called it "Cockswile USA." He asked us if we had any spare tracks and that was a particular track that we'd done with Kris Needs, Simon Phillips, Nick Burton, Andy Hughes, myself and anyone else who happened to be in the studio. Anyway, we got loads of drink in and decided to do a vocal track. And Kris Needs was so pissed he was doing vocals. He was doing The Funky Cock [makes chicken noises], so that why it's called "Cockswile." It was all done so tongue-in-cheek as usual. They're the best things that we can do as The Orb. There's a bit of humour in there. Alcohol used in the right way can be very invigorating.

Some of the tracks on *Orbivision* sound like they're influenced by drum 'n' bass.

A lot of these things were recorded a long time ago. We finished the album last May. It comes out in March, which will be almost be a year since finishing it, when it should have been out two months after. So that in itself is a hint at what we were doing at the beginning of the year, and if we were doing the album now we would be hell for leather in there. But I think

also that we would be taking it to another extreme. The intro was really beautiful. I can see Bill Laswell's influence in there.

When I was out in America a lot of people came up to me. 'Hey man, I hear David Bowie's doing Jungle, man.' He'd been working with A Guy Called Gerald, but no one's heard of A Guy Called Gerald, so everyone assumes that David Bowie's been in the studio doing Jungle tracks. Again, because Bill Laswell's associated with so many things people assume he's doing them all, but other people are doing things and giving them for people to put out on his label. You've got to realise that it's not all him, but he's giving everyone the opportunity, that's what I think is so brilliant. I'm doing an 11 till 8:30 in the morning DJ spot on Saturday. If I'd brought all those records along, I'd only play things that were two months old. See how you got on with my record collection, you bugger! I've just woke up as well, that's the thing.



JOHN OSWALD "Fault Forces" from *Grayfolded: Transitive* Axis (Swell/Artfact)

This is a bit of a wild card.

Like the others weren't wild cards? Can't you just give me a normal card? [After a minute] Did you take any mushrooms before you came, or what? It's curious, that's all. I don't think it would go down very well with my reggae mates. It conjures up lots of things, but it's not something my mum would listen to. Probably someone really famous.

It is, but it's been reworked by someone else.

I can't stand that guitar. What is it?

It's John Oswald's reworking of The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star". Obviously he got permission from the group to do this but he got into trouble with all the uncensored samples on his *Phonopunks* records. I interviewed Steve Reich recently and he apparently told his record company not to sue you for sampling his *Electric Counterpoint* on "Little Fluffy Clouds".

[Laughs] That was done in our bedroom. We never even thought it would actually get anywhere. Those days we were selling 1000 records. With Rickie Lee Jones, at the end of the day it was a question of 5000 dollars just for using the vocal, because of the fact that we took it completely out of context. And she was just talking in an interview similar to this, but I haven't got a sexy voice like hers.

You used that Minnie Riperton sample from "Loving You" on "A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain", as well. We're waiting for consequences. What Jimmy (Cauty) was doing with The Timebirds and KLF, that kind of rubbed off on The Orb in that respect, use it, abuse it, and wait for the consequence. You'll get more news out of doing that than you just do your own stuff.

I heard "Loving You" out in Manchester a couple of months ago, the dance version. Oh, dear oh dear. Have you ever heard of The Rotary Connection? That was the band she was originally in, Minnie Riperton.

They were like a fusion of jazz, disco. Heavy Metal. Really weird stuff.

So you don't like this track?

Never got into Grateful Dead. They're well respected in San Francisco but it doesn't float my boat. I never really was a West Coast hippy for a start. I had a manager once who wanted The Orb to become the new Grateful Dead, in terms of visuals and stuff, which was a bit weird. He kept showing us all these videos they'd done. I hate guitars like this. I'd probably get shot if I played that out.

We played three gigs in their gig hall in San Francisco, probably won't do any more gigs after this. We did a gig there in 1993 on my birthday, one of the best Orb gigs I ever remember. They let us use all their visuals. The visuals were outstanding. It was like being in a time tunnel on stage. That's all I remember. It might be something else but it was my birthday. I was allowed to be like that!

Did you meet the group?

We might have done, but they were a bit 'San Francisco'. They talk really slow and you get bored after about three seconds. Go on, bang another one on, or is that enough torment?



COLD CUT "Atomic Frog 2000" (Ninja Tune)

[After a minute] Turn it up. This really reminds me of something from the 80s, but it's really brand new as well, it's crap.

It's the new Coldcut single.

It's the vocal that's putting me off it. It's like the Reagan sample, the four minute warning. They're all right. That "Beriana Walk" sample they did was brilliant, the reggae one that got to number one. But I was a bit disappointed with them when they did some "Little Fluffy Clouds" remixes for Big Life. It wasn't their fault. I was never entirely happy with those mixes and yet Big Life put them out. He [Matt Black] was doing stuff with Youth, but me and Youth just changed directions together.

Do you listen to their Kiss FM sessions?

Been on and done the sessions with them. It was really good fun. As people they're really nice people, but... it's the first time I've heard this. I'd probably have to hear it really, really, really loud in a club in a different context. That's why I like DJing. Listening to stuff at home then play it out at fucking mass-level and it's like a different track. And that's how I work in the studio half the time as well.

[The interview is abruptly brought to a close earlier than planned. Paterson plays the next track on the Coldcut record at floor-shaking volume and turns the tape recorder back on.] It is OK. The second track [The Herbaliser's mix of "Post Nuclear Afterlife Lounge"] is a lot better. But it's only my humble opinion. You played something inadvertently that I liked, then. □



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the primer

The degree to which John Zorn — composer, saxophonist, jazz musician, label organiser, conceptualiser — has polarised opinion is remarkable even in a field where polarised opinions are hardly rare.

For over 20 years he has been writing and performing music of astonishing breadth, with various areas of interest (to name some: film music, free jazz, hardcore thrash, Yiddish folk music) explored almost obsessively. The records recorded under his own name or by groups he has led and co-led number at least 50, and records to which he has contributed at least three times that. In addition, the two record labels he has headed through the 90s — Tokyo-based Avant and New York's Tzadik — have been responsible for always interesting and often indispensable releases, their eclecticism naturally reflecting Zorn's own tastes, mapping the occult lines from Japanese noise to contemporary composition to Ambient atmospherics to sampling collage to thrash pop. At a time when the musical underground prides itself on an openness of attitude which so infrequently bears fruit, Zorn's labels provide a remarkable and genuinely all-embracing fund of new music. (They have also been the source of some of the most stunning cover art and graphics of recent years.)

Yet Zorn attracts at least as many detractors as he does staunch advocates — indeed, probably more ignored by the mainstream contemporary art music establishment (see *Kristalnacht* below), his methods and concepts are yet deemed too highbrow by a musical underground too often concerned with attitudes and posturing to see beyond their own nose.

To a degree Zorn is to blame for this. One accusation which can never be fairly levelled at him is that he's gone out of his way to court opinion. Quite the contrary, in recent years in particular, his attitude to standard music business practices generally and the press in particular has become increasingly entrenched. (*The Wire* is not exempt from his scorn, he once claimed to keep a stack of this journal in his toilet, and it plainly wasn't there to be read.) He not only refuses to give interviews himself but Tzadik remain notoriously reluctant to promote its releases, and a recent rumour had it that Zorn refuses to let the musicians in his Masada group talk to the press while on tour with him.

In the end, though, Zorn's body of work makes him one of the most vital musical assets we have, and his reluctance to be more open only make his achievements more intriguing.



An occasional series in which we offer a neophyte's guide to the must-have recordings of some of the names we like to drop a lot. This month, Simon Hopkins grapples with the genre-busting output of **John Zorn**

First Recordings

(Tzadik TZ7304 CD)

With an increasing (and rather Zappa-like) sense of self-reliance Zorn has realised that you're better off performing archaeological reclamation of your own work than letting someone else do it. One of Tzadik's projects is the 'Archival Series', an opportunity to release long-forgotten tapes, resuscitate crucial but now unavailable recordings or record previously unheard compositions. By definition *First Recordings* is barely among Zorn's

genuinely most important work, but if you want to get a hold on where he came from it's pretty essential.

Recorded in 1973 and 74, when their creator was, as his own oddly moving sleeve notes make apparent, a 19 year old coming to terms with his 'sad lonely life of self-imposed alienation and exile', the pieces both form a picture of a prodigiously experimental mind and somehow set a blueprint for many of the records to follow over the next 20-odd years.

The music certainly explores techniques which Zorn would go on to truly make his own. 'Mikhal Zetropne' is



ILLUSTRATION: SHARON PENCE

a jump-cutting collage of screaming vocals, bashed found objects and soprano saxophone, "Variations On A Theme By Albert Ayler" and "Automata Of Al-Jarzan" reveal an innate skill for arranging sampled sound, the brutally hamfisted guitar playing on "Wind Kolla" hints at a kind of besotted love of the instrument later revealed in his choice of extraordinary guitar players as collaborators: Derek Bailey, Marc Ribot, Bill Fiskel, Key Hano, Robert Quine, Fred Frith, Arto Lindsay.

What comes through most strongly here—in the music's influences and in the themes on which it is based (I mean, check those titles: this is a 19-year-old, remember!)—is a sense of wonder at the arcane, a need to explore something beyond the mundane. Zorn once described a youthful epiphany, watching the look of horror on his schoolfriends' faces as he played them a recording of Maurice Kagel. These early recordings see him translating that impulse into his own art, and two decades on it continues to inform his work.

The Big Gundown (Elektra Nonesuch 979139 CD)

Filmworks Volume 2 (Tzadik TZ7306 CD)

Film music, both real and imaginary, is big news at present, of course. Not altogether typically Zorn was there a decade ago. *The Big Gundown* remains one of the 80s' most crucial albums, and of all Zorn's massive output it's this and his other Elektra collage work, *Solluna*, for which he remains best known outside the circle of ardent followers. It's easy to see why. *The Big Gundown* is in every sense a totally accessible work.

A whole bunch of Zorn's contemporaries from New York's downtown avant-garde community, as well as such notables as Toots Thelma, Dismalé Gales and Big John Patton, crash through arrangements of the

compositions of Ennio Morricone. Morricone has, of course, become the name to drop when any discussion of cult film composers arises. Zorn illustrates why. His arrangements seek out the real weirdness at the core of Morricone's music—the bizarre juxtapositions, the unique melodies, the absolute melodrama—and then heighten it. Still essential.

Filmworks runs to at least three volumes, bringing together various aspects of Zorn's film music work: pieces for art house films, interpretations of existing scores, and imaginary soundtracks. The second volume of the series is a complete score for an imaginary Walter Hill film. Hill's films are already well catered for by Ry Cooder's scores, which at their best (*Trespass*, *The Long Riders*) are the finest in the medium, but

Zorn's piece is more than up to the job, straddling jaunty folk music, tense atmospherics and oddly loping funk grooves, summoning up a world of contemporary urban drugs deals and 19th-century backwoods outlaws. Yet more evidence, as if it were needed, that today's best soundtrack work has yet to make it on to celluloid.

Voodoo with The Sonny Clark Memorial Quartet (Black Saint BSR0109 CD)

News For Lulu with George Lewis and Bill Frisell (Hot Hut HatART6005 CD)

A constant problem for Zorn's detractors, or at least the more conservative of them, is that he can evidently play the ass off the saxophone. The fact that he's one of the most adept hard bop players to have emerged in the last couple of decades has been largely swept under the carpet, however. It's not difficult to see why. Mainstream jazz in the 80s was so manifestly about style as much as music—and specifically about a certain 50s leashed retro-cool—that a geek with knee-length striped socks and a Napalm Death T-shirt plainly wasn't going to cut it.

Except, of course, that he did. *Voodoo* features a quartet one might expect to turn in the usual downtown post-modernist mayhem. Zorn on alto, Wayne Horvitz on piano, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Bobby Previte. Instead the group play through seven pieces by the 60s parast Sonny Clark with an overt love of the material which never becomes reverential. Drummond and Previte are an exceptional rhythm section, both driving and playful, and around them Horvitz (on this evidence a big fan of Lennie Tristano) and Zorn hang knowing, sassy and impassioned soloing.

News For Lulu is more intriguing still, bringing Zorn together with AACM alumnus and electronics experimenter George Lewis and regular companion Frisell to play pieces by Clark, Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley and Freddie Redd. It's an unlikely line-up to

the primer

play this material but like Voodoo the music swings fiercely (and without the aid of a rhythm section). All three musicians seem to have an intuitive feel for the music's exuberance, and as the pieces progress through blues swagger, funk grime and the occasional sublime ballad, what emerges is a refusal to reduce the music to contemporary jazz clichés. Hard bop is so frequently used as an arena for virtuosos to grandstand that it seems no one can find fresh life in it. With a fierce hatred of any such tendencies, Zorn, Lewis and Frisell instead find the music's heart; you can hear them grinning all the way. Pure enjoyment.



Zorn as ultra-nord

pretty straight, though blisteringly well, but it's the first half which is truly shocking. Zorn arranges 11 Coleman classics as though played by one of the groups he cites in the album's credits: Napalm Death, Blind Idiot God, Lip Cream, what he refers to as the New York-London-Tokyo Hardcore Triangle. Which may sound like some land of academic exercise, something the music plainly isn't. Ornette's exuberant melodies are compressed into quadruple speed bursts of energy, Borne and Zorn sounding on the edge of immolation, Baron and Vatcher like they're going through the floor. As exhausting and thrilling after a hundred listens as it is on the first.

Zorn's reinterpretation of Ornette's own revolution has continued in the 90s with his ongoing *Masada* project, currently running to seven or eight volumes. Fans will want the entire work, but the series' opener, *Alef*, states the case well enough. Thematicaly based on the defiant Jewish mass suicide at Masada in AD 73, the music mimes traditional Yiddish melodies to the sound of Ornette's classic 60s group. No jazz music of the last 30 years is so steeped in the cry of the blues as Coleman's; Zorn grasps this instinctively, bringing together two musics of defiance and exuberance. The musicianship is awesome (Zorn is joined by trumpeter Dave Douglas, bassist Greg Cohen and regular cohort Baron), but beyond the group's technical grasp of the material is an underlying understanding of its passionate energy. Unquestionably among the few important acoustic jazz records of the 90s.

Naked City
with Naked City
(Elektra Nonesuch 579238 CD)

Grand Guignol
with Naked City
(Avant AVAND02 CD)

Absinthe
with Naked City
(Avant AVAND04 CD)

Zorn debuted *Naked City* on Nonesuch in 1989. He denied that it was a supergroup, citing The Golden Palominos as an example of why supergroups never really work. But as ad hoc groupings of musicians go this pretty much brought together the cream of the 80s NYC downtown set: Frisell, Horvitz, Baron, Fred Frith on bass and, as occasional guest, Boredoms' extraordinary vocalist Yamatsuka Eye. *Naked City* marks out the group's territory: jump-cutting micro-collages of hardcore, Country, sleazy jazz, covers of John Barry and Ornette Coleman, brief abstract tussles — a whole city crammed into two or three minute bursts. The album's poles are its finest moments and somehow sum up all that the group seemed to do best: a 'suite' of ultra-brief thrashes which still manage to pump genres two or three times in the space of a couple of bars, and a gorgeous rendering of Jerry Goldsmith's untouched theme from *Chinatown*, which emerges magically from

a haze of free improvisation.

A series of albums on Avant quickly saw the group move on to other areas, albeit taking with them their customary verve. *Absinthe* lives up to the promise of its cover art's extremely disturbing Hans Belmer photographs. Conceptually based on the inner experiences of *fin de siècle* Parisian intellectuals while tripping on their favourite narcotic tipples, the album namechecks Mick Harris and Giambo Scelsi in the same breath, strangely arming at something which might have been termed isolationism, were it not for its creator's distance from anything remotely post about this music.

Grand Guignol is something else again, essentially bringing together three entirely discreet works. The title



piece recalls something of *Absinthe*'s nightmare droves but is interrupted with violent outbursts and overall has an appropriately melodramatic horror-flick patina. There follows a suite of remarkable interpretations of Debussy, Scriabin, Liszt, Ives and Messiaen. In all the several hours of recorded *Naked City* this has to be the most unexpected. The pieces are quite mischievous, rendered with sumptuous arrangements and details bordering on the kitsch. A friend once commented that these tracks made him think of Tomita, and I have to say that Frisell's reverb-soaked, translucent chords remind me of BJ Cole's interpretations of the French Impressionists on *Transparent Music*, an album which similarly flirts with kitsch. So? Zorn was namechecking the likes of Esquivel long before the largely risible *Easy Listening* revival, and his ear for the exotic is as strong as his ear for the violent, the chaotic or the outrageous. The album closes with all 34 of the slash-and-burn vignettes partially premiered on *Naked City* and collected together previously on the largely impossible-to-find *Torture Garden*. Anyone who doesn't enjoy these pieces is simply thinking about it too much.

Spy Vs Spy
(Elektra Musician 5960844 CD)

Masada: Alef
(DIW DIW588 CD)

Spy Vs Spy remains in every sense iconic, from Mark Beyer's superb twisted comic-book art to the sleevelet's declaration "fucking hardcore rules". God knows what Elektra thought they were getting when they signed Zorn but I doubt it was this. An all-acoustic twin-group — Zorn and Tim Berne on alto, Mark Dresser on bass, Joey Baron and Michael Vatcher on drums — play Ornette Coleman songs straddling nearly 30 years, from 1959's "Chronology" to tracks from 1987's in *All Languages*. The second half is played

Cobra: Tokyo Operations 94

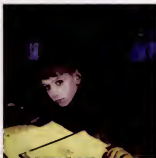
(Avant AVAND49 CD)

Harris

with Derek Bailey and William Parker

(Avant AVAND56 CD)

It's instructive to compare Zorn's free playing with his game theory pieces, and these two CDs exemplify both. In the early '80s, very much under the influence of John Cage (still his most obvious 20th century predecessor), Zorn developed various strategies for large groups of musicians to improvise with a collective aim. For the listener any recording of these pieces makes it difficult to actually know what's going on thematically, although it's always apparent that some deep structure is at play. An earlier version of *Cobra* released on the Swiss hat HUT label is a better, but this take, featuring bass, guitar and drums alongside sundry traditional Japanese instruments,



only heightens the alien nature of this music, as one bizarre moment supercedes another over and over. As Zorn himself notes, "In a world of *Cobras*, this one stands apart."

It was free jazz, though, as much as John Cage, which provided Zorn with both an initial stimulus and platform. There are so many recordings featuring Zorn in free playing scenarios that it's difficult to choose one example, but this recent live Knitting Factory performance is outstanding, seeing all three players on colossal form. It's always a delight to hear Zorn and Bailey together, the younger player has a genuine empathy with the master's unique language, and here you can really sense the heightened levels of communication.

What emerges on both records is Zorn's uncanny ability to create order from chaos. On *Harris* he's inside the music, making its architecture unmistakably his own, even in the company of such distinguished improvisers, and a recording of *Cobra* is as much his own as that of a composer performed note-perfect, say, two centuries after his death. Two completely hair-raising records.

Kristallnacht

(Eiv WWCX2050 CD)

The undeniable truth about Zorn is that, consummate internationalist tendencies aside, he is squarely in a tradition of maverick American composers that stretches from Charles Ives through Harry Partch and Conlon Nanarow to John Cage. The rise and rise of Minimalism has, of course, rather horribly eclipsed this tradition, so it's hardly surprising to find Zorn left out in the cold by the mainstream of American art music any more than it's surprising to find a lesser, but crucially more art-music-friendly composer such as Ingram Marshall state, "I don't like Zorn's music, and though I don't know him personally he seems like a loudmouth!" (What a genius.)

Whatever. *Kristallnacht*, Zorn's musical evocation of the event which forms the symbolic beginning of the Holocaust, is one of the major works of composition of the last 20 years or so. Liberal Gentle attitudes towards the Holocaust remain ambivalent, vacillating between a



doying and entirely inappropriate sentimentality and a tendency to write it off as simply one of any number of 20th century atrocities. Zorn sidesteps both attitudes, seeing the Holocaust not as some clichéd emblem of man's inhumanity to man but rather positing it as a specifically Jewish event.

The beautiful opening evocation of ghetto life, all plangent Yiddish melodies played by trumpeter Frank Langan and clarinetist David Krakauer, overlaid with German radio broadcasts, is soon overcome by the album's central piece, "Never Again", 12 minutes of high-frequency shattering (which the sleeve notes helpfully suggest might make the listener nauseous or cause hearing damage), literally the smashing of Jewish shopkeepers' and householders' windows on *Kristallnacht*, metaphorically the imminent destruction of several million lives. From then on, a coming to terms, sad but proud folk melodies wrung out of Mark Feldman's wail constantly pulled apart by dissonant harmonies and Mark Ribot's scratching, raging guitar (Ribot is at his absolute best on this album).

Zorn's exploration of his own Jewishness is ongoing, *Tzadik* has its own sub-series investigating "Radical

Jewish Culture" and, of course, the continuing *Mosada* project is a massive work of Jewish art. But *Kristallnacht* is something else again: a search for roots but also a confrontation, a demand, a scream of defiant anger.

Excution Ground

with Panikiller

(Toy's Factory TFCK8873 1 3CDs)

And for fun

Panikiller, Zorn's trio with Bill Laswell and Mick Harris, made a somewhat notorious debut in this country, the release of their *Guts Of A Virgin* album through Earache (about whose mainstream acts, Napalm Death and Carcass, Zorn had previously waxed so lyrical) delayed courtesy of HM Customs and Excise's interest in the album's intended path-lab cover art. Subsequent albums — *Burned Secrets and Rituals* (recorded live in Japan and featuring the usual scorched earth contributions of Keij Hano) — developed the debut's



melting of deep dub bass, hardcore freak-outs and unfettered sax screaming, but the triple CD *Excution Ground* remains the group's best jumping-on point, a kind of summing up of everything they do best.

The first disc features three 15 minute pieces with Zorn screaming hard pop lines, often heavily *FXed*, draped over sometimes hard, sometimes languorous grooves. The second disc features two long Ambient mixes of pieces from the first, which bear more resemblance to Laswell's and Harris's work throughout the 90s than to Zorn's, as such it's an opportunity to hear his saxophone in another universe from the many it already inhabits. The third disc is the real conker, the trio at their most ferocious, live in Osaka in 1994, ably abetted at times by Yamsuka Eye. After four long, relentless, bludgeoning onslaughts, Eye and Zorn perform five tiny duets, each under two minutes, which sum up Zorn's work as well as anything in his canon intense, hilarious, angry, they have you by the seat of your pants. *Excution Ground* through Corgo Elektra through WEA, Hot Hat, Black Saint, DMW and Avant through Harmonia Mund. *Excution Ground* through Toys Factory through Greyhound and Harmonia Mund.

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound



Sabri Brothers

Sausage Machine 15

Navigator — A Little Astronomy (Noisebox)
Various — United Mutations (Lo Recordings)
Pram — Music For Your Moves (Duophonic)
Jon Spencer — Get With It (In The Red)
Ganger — Hollywood Love! (Series 500)
Bob Tilton — Crescent (Subjugation)
Blowpipe — Kucouy (Needlework)
Hood — Silent BB (Skumberland)
Tortoise — The Taut And The Tame (Wagon Christ Remix) (City Slang)
Novak — Silver Seas (Earworm)
Comershop — Butter The Soul (Wija)
Fuxa — Very Well Organised (Chel)
Quickspace — Quickspace (Kitty Kitty Corporation)
Third Eye Foundation — Ghost (Domino)
Various — Super Sounds Of Bosworth 2 (Trunk)
15 records by recent Sausage Machine guest groups/DJs, compiled by Marbus, The Sausage Machine, Fridays, London Hope & Anchor

Body & Blood 10

Panasonic @ Opa Club, Montreal
Solo Retina Stimulants/Bloodyminded/Woe Is Me
 @ Pyramid Club, New York City
Sabri Brothers @ Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto
Tony Conrad @ Music Gallery, Toronto
Hariprasad Chaurasia/Zakir Hussain @ John Bassett

Theatre, Toronto
Autochre in Toronto
Rapoon @ Rivik, Toronto/X-Club, Hamilton
Sankal Juku @ Hummingbird Centre, Toronto
Asha Bhosle @ Moisson Amphitheatre, Toronto
Top 10 live performances of 1996 compiled by Proseur Bissel, Body & Blood Exploration, Oakville, Ontario, Canada

Metropolis 10

Michael Moore — Tunes For Horn Guys (Rambox)
Butch Morris/Le Quin Minh/JA Deane — Burning Cloud (FMP)
James Plotkin — The Joy Of Disease (Awant)
Karl Blake — Answering Machine Solution (Steelplate)
Ulen Bator — 2 (DSA)
John Zorn — Filmworks V (Tzadik)
Derek Bailey — Guitar, Drums 'N' Bass (Awant)
Terry Riley — The Lisbon Concert (New Albion)
Phil Minton — Mouthful Of Ecstasy (Mict)
Mark-Anthony Turnage — Dispelling The Fears (Argo)
Compiled by Rui Neves, Metropolis, Xfm, Lisboa/Operto, Portugal

Rykodisc 10

Citizens Utilities — Lost And Foundered (Mute America)
Low — The Curtain Hits The Cast (Vernon Yard)
Herbert — 100lbs (Phonol)

Arto Lindsay — Hyper Cuckoo (advance tape)
The Infinity Project — The Mystery Of The Yes (TIP)
Jackie Leven — Forbidden Songs Of The Dying West (Cooking Vinyl)
Underk — Underk (Emt)
Jack — Pioneer Soundtracks (Top Pure)
Lal Waterson & Oliver Knight — Once In A Blue Moon (Topic)
The Eels — Beautiful Freak (Dreamworks)
Compiled by "the drones" in the office of the Rykodisc label

The Office Ambience

To Rococo Rot — Veculo (City Slang)
Various — Anokha Sounds Of The Asian Underground (Hsango)
Directions In Music — Directors In Music (Thrill Jockey)
Surge — For The Time Being (LJI)
Sam Rivers — Concept (Rivbea)
Cube 40 — Cube 40 (Force Inc Music Works)
Michael Brook — Albino Alligator (4AD)
Dillinja/Lemon D — Violent 12 01 (Valve)
Brian Ferneyhough — String Quartets (Montaigne)
Geocom — Keywell 12" (Skam)
Kevin Saunderson — Faces & Phases (Sw6)
Lucid — Idylls And The Secret Remant (Aeterna)
Shantel — Auto Jams & Remixes (INFRACOM)
Choying Droma & Steve Tibbetts — Cho (Hannibal)
Various — Night Passage Demixed (Dorobo)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

sound check

Through the night: February's selected CDs, albums and 12" s



No jacket required: Keith Jarrett reviewed page 49

AMM
Luminol
MATCHLESS MKCD 31 CD

Eddie Prévost
Lost Of Change
MATCHLESS MKCD 32 CD

AMM
AMM Music 1986
RECOMMENDED B&B AMPCD-CD

It seems incredible that AMM have been performing and recording improvised music for 30 years. What must have sounded

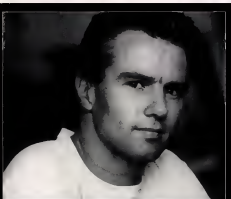
extraordinary in 1956 still retains the power to astonish, move and occasionally outrage 90s audiences who think they've heard everything. The recent David Tudor tribute concert was a fine example of this — drummer Eddie Prevost, pianist John Tilbury and guitarist Keith Rowe turned in a beautifully balanced performance that seemed to suck the oxygen out of the hall and leave the audience breathless. *Luminol* (a huge three CD set of live AMM recordings from 1969, 82 and 94) has that same captivating effect. Attention to each moment is imperative, to be distracted for even an instant while the music is playing runs the risk

of missing some vital section of group interplay, the key that will make this seemingly formless music suddenly rear up into an identifiable shape.

If AMM ever had a star then it was the composer and pianist Cornelius Cardew, who is featured here alongside Prevost, Rowe, saxophone player Lou Gare and Christopher Hobbs on "The Aarhus Sequence", the first of these three discs which was recorded on 16 December 1969 in Denmark. Cardew's presence at this stage of AMM's development would become the blueprint for later performances and recordings. Although he never lived to appear on the accompanying

Reviewed this month:

AMM Bernhard Arndt
Autechre Badawi **Han**
Bennink & Dave Douglas
Biosintes **Bisk** Bloodbath
Bowery Electric Glenn
Branca **Michael Brook**
Cassiber **George Clinton**
Coldcut & DJ Krush **Dabao**
Choying Drokma & Steve
Tibbetts **Michael Finnissy** GP
Hall **Peter Hammill** Hidden
Rooms **id** Battery David
Jackson **Keith Jarrett** Arthur
Jarvinen/California Ear Unit
Kampec Dolores Kredler
John Law Trio Loren
Mazzacane **Lost In Space**
Gary Lucas **René Lussier**
Mixed **Thurston Moore** Butch
Morris/Le Quin Ninh/IA
Desane **Gary Moscheles** New
York **Soundscape** **OHM** The
Orb **Pavement** Anthony
Payne **Eddie Prevost** Prince
Charming **Rastafari Liveth In**
The Hearts Of Everyone
Itinarily Return Of The DJ
Roots Control Jon Rose
Sonny Simmons Suns Of
Ara **Luther Thomas** Trans
Am **UMO** The Unfinished
Unknown Public Unlabeled **Alan**
Vega Yokota Sato Yumiko
plus critical beats and outer
limits releases in brief



Michael Brook
Albino Alligator
 401 CAD 7000 CDLP

The soundtrack album — genuine, imaginary or enhanced — has become something of a new musical form, one that may come to rival the dance suite, the song cycle or the symphony. Recent albums as diverse as Shaun Davy's meiotic score to *Twelfth Night* or Rob Ellis's magnificent *Soundtrack To Spies* have used the soundtrack concept to yoke together sound, speech and song and a wide variety of timbres that wouldn't necessarily work together in a concert work or regular album.

The latest album by Michael Brook, the talented Canadian guitarist and producer, comes into the enhancement category ("music from and inspired by," the movie *Albino Alligator*, the directing debut of actor Kevin Spacey). There's much of the rich, cannily layered guitar sounds we have come to expect from Brook, but also some effective grooves — slightly unfinished sounding ones such as "Slow Town" that add some Country music electrospice to the score. Brook's soundtrack style is closer to Ry Cooder or Jack Nitzsche (with a touch of Angelo Badalamenti twang on "Preparation") than James Horner or Richard Robbins. Brook must have had a fair amount of freedom and time to put his wide palette of timbres to work. Outstanding moments include the terse, tabla-driven "Phalacaloo"; the quiet, sparse mandolin of "Tunnel"; and what sounds like one of Jonty Harrison's kitchen utensils, again the cool-quiet narration of "Albo Gaer".

The final, high-concept vocal track, co-produced by Flavio, bassist with The Red Hot Chili Peppers, is a cover of "If I Wasn't" by Jimmy Scott and Michael Sépe. It would be nice to hear an instrumental version of this ingenious arrangement.

JOHN L. WALTERS

discs that make up this set, Cardew is most definitive in the wings, his creative spirit gently guiding the remaining members towards new improvisational discoveries. Lou Gare is the other creative catalyst, his occasional injection of sex-wielding pop the improvisation in unlearned directions and breathes fresh life into the rest of the group's playing.

After Cardew's death (by a hit-and-run driver) and the departure of Gare, her roles were taken over by pianist John Tibbry. The third disc, entitled "Contextual," is a 1994 New York performance and a fine example of how the trio of Gare, Rowe and Prévos sounds today, forever pushing out tendrils of invention that coil around each other only to spring back and take another form. Sometimes the music is loud and seemingly

disjointed, sometimes it's subdued, minimalist and oddly threatening, the calm before the heat-sound storm.

Lou Gare's masterpiece, however, is to be found on the second disc, "The Great Hair," a 1982 concert recorded at Goldsmith's College, London on 20 February. This was a particularly magical night for AMM with Keith Rowe's transistor radio-guitar summoning from the ether the ghost of moptop Beckermania and a brassy rendition of "Mortie Reeves And The Vandellas' "Heat Wave," which are sucked into the gurgles of a massive improvisation. This chance meeting with pop bears all the hallmarks of John Lennon's and Yoko Ono's welded "Revolution No 9" avant rock fantasies, only in the hands of Rowe and company something far more accomplished

and complex emerges. A fantastic moment, Drummer Eddie Prévost asks Leo Of Change, album is subtitled "Sound and Sensibility" and Prévos, proves that he is an expert in both by giving his chosen instrument its own voice — the drums seem to speak a universal language, but it's one that only he can articulate fluently. It's a joy to hear him bow cymbals, hit his kit and bring forth thunder from inside the belly of his beloved barrel drum, a home-made instrument that gives Prévos almost Harry Panchus status.

Those new to AMM should also pick up Ro's newly reissued AMM Music 1966, the unit's first recording (again with Cardew) which was originally released by Elektra UK, in the 60s and has now been reissued with extra material and a booklet that traces their early history. AMM aficionados will find this already, but it remains one of the cornerstones of the entire UK improvisation scene.

EDWIN POWNEY

Autechre

Chaotic Slide
 WARP WARP8 CD/LP

Autechre are probably the only group in the world who can make the extreme noise terror of Merzbow sound positively humorous. At least Merzbow is venting rage (as articulated as it may be) at something; the music of Rob Brown and Sean Bobbitt represents one of the most hermetic environments I have ever encountered.

As with Aphex Twin, their invented worlds which serve as song titles display a refusal to communicate with anyone other than themselves. This ability to have a glimpse into the world of borderline psychosis is a reversal of the way popular music has worked until now: music as a vehicle to discover your body as a means of somehow expressing the ineffable or at least the uncomfortable, as a way of apprehending swirling, confusing emotions, as a membership badge for a social body. Instead of miring the painfully shy, the confused, the disenfranchised into the world, *Autechre* and their ilk almost force the audience to retreat.

Perhaps this is why "Twee", one of the more stunning examples of Techno-Densism, is so effective: they are able to fuse Middle Eastern elements to their own twisted soundworld without regard to any language other than their own. Fiddling, twirling machines and system noise gradually become chaotic string instruments as brassy percussion devices emerge from a matrix of flanking oscillators. Elsewhere, pleasant synth obligatos divide into siren-like trills as a sampled zither rises from the schematic pitchwork of rigid and obvious drum patterns on "Cipster", dark, ominous string and woodwind elegies denature the Marimbas of static on "Hub", and denatured rhythms wear off on their own lengths throughout. Unlike 1995's *Inc Repetee*, Chaotic Slide barely even makes a nod towards the notion of a beat. The crude

insistence of the rhythms on *Inc Repetee* made it partially edgy and unsettling. The new album is slightly less tense, but no less chilling.

PETER SHAPIRO

Badawi

Bedouin Sound Clash
 ROR RORCO R202 CD

Roots Control

Dread Western
 WOODSOUND W50008 CD

OHM

Grounded To The Inner Current
 WOODSOUND W50011 CD

Just occasionally the expansion of electronic music-making and its wider dissemination seems a bad idea. The slow of desktop music saving from people with cool record collections tends to result in more and more almost-but-not-quite sounds issued to widespread indifference. Narrowcast music with plentiful attitude but neither structure nor urgency. If it's that easy, why bother? The dodger end of New York's librettist scene feels like this, though thankfully not all of the new New York music sounds so obvious — Sub Dub, We and Paul O Miller are making some killer sounds. But who can be bothered with all these sample-bonzas over head-nod beats when the styles of reconstruction practised in the popular field in the UK have a fiercer, less knowing edge?

The OHM album is a case in point — lightweight post-dub with weak synth and run-of-the-mill bass. Music from the four corners of the hipster's bedroom is thrown on in no, of course. There's also an over-reliance for the catch-all wave of Asian-era Material. It fails to repeat the (questionable) successes of that group's work, which always seemed more like text messages than finished music. In the context of such understanding, stilt, the Woodsound label's radical posturing grates.

Dread Western is a more precisely directed effort. The album picks up on the loose connection between 70s Jamaica and Spagetti Westerns, and fashions some lovely, stinky grooves. Like much of the scene's music it's a kind of freedom day, and the usual sub bass sounds and grinningly slow High-Pop-influenced beats dominate. In the wrong hands this blend can be excruciatingly tedious, but the record is far more coherent than some of the label's earlier releases. Rather than heading for dub excess it makes great use of simplicity. On tracks like "Theme From Dread Western" the mix is leavened with a hint of playfulness, and there are some wondrously mischievous vocals drifting over the tunes.

The best of this bunch is the Badawi album. Badawi, aka Raz Mousa, is an Israeli who spent a lot of his childhood living with Bedouins in the Sinai desert. At the age of seven he learnt about Middle Eastern drumming as a Palestinian refugee camp and went on to learn the bendir, zarb and

derbunka instruments. Now a member of Sub Dub and a key NYC DJ, the work he makes under the Badawi name is a kind of dub with Middle Eastern percussion, a lot lighter than Sub Dub's brain-bending onslaughts. *Bedouin Sound Clash* was recorded with a four-track cassette recorder but, like a lot of first-wave dub, makes a virtue of these limitations. This is a rich dose of echo-soaked music. The bass rhythms are adapted to suit the percussion and the resulting tracks come in a way that most similarly ambitious fusions never get near it. Cuts a clear path out of the forest of dead sound, and verbal material that has accumulated around dub. Again, instead of going for ostentatious sampled root-and-branching Heredia dedicates himself to working out some really lively rhythmic ideas and making his effects do more than simply proclaim themselves.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Han Bennink & Dave Douglas

Serpentine
SONJUNGLES SL 1519 CD

A set of duets between the very Dutch percussionist and the highly reformed US trumpet of *Piscada* renown. Douglas seems to enjoy space (of the freedom of his *Tiny Bell Trio*) and working with only a percussionist gives him plenty — not that a musician like Bennink is ever going to take a back seat, of course. These rather inward-looking improvisations score high when it comes to sweet playing but demand a lot of patience from the listener. Despite the fact that Bennink is an immensely alive percussionist and Douglas is among the most resourceful of contemporary trumpeters, the music doesn't speak very clearly outside itself. Whether reworking "Cherokee" or playing completely free, these two communicate happily; the question is whether anyone else is in on the game. Douglas plays with his usual unforgotten depth and Bennink riffs in his humour but sports only very occasionally. It may be that a third voice would have made things gal. The duo works best on the title track, a buoyant piece of throwaway jazz written by Douglas. Occasionally brilliant, but it's a long 55 minutes.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Bisk

Time
SUB ROMA SM 12 CD

Sato Yumiko

Ethnic Echo Presents Sato Yumiko
KPSIO 000000 CD

Yokota

Kosmo And Me
WARTHOUSE WPC2 CD

When you have that much technology to hand, what are you going to do with it all?

Revel in it, singing its own praises — or use it as a means of escape into your own personal empire of the senses. Both Bisk, aka Hajihara Fuyukawa, and Sato Yumiko opt for the former, attempting to encapsulate their homeland in musical terms. Unfortunately, Japan is such a dichotomy success can only mean failure. Susumu Yokota avoids such pitfalls by sidestepping reality completely.

Yumiko takes full advantage of the sampler, perhaps the perfect musical device for a country that has built its reputation on transforming existing materials. Lutes jostle with Godfidda, Motiva et al ("Wiegler"), a cocktail uncorralled piano glimmers across a rain-soaked urban street ("B1 2"), state-of-the-art digitala rubs shoulders with a muted 50s trumpet ("Gloom"). But there's little thought of confidence, leading to a muddled hotpotch of musical ideas. This scatter-gun attitude, allied to a series of harsh, one-dimensional triphop beats, makes for a singularly grating experience.

Yumiko works in a similar, albeit more inveterate way, compiling fractured Electronica from tiny shards of rhythm and melody. He uses the DAT almost as a sketchpad, seeing what sounds in together best. As such it could almost be seen as a work in progress, but it still doesn't make for a particularly lively listening experience. It's too episodic. At times this works to Yumiko's advantage. "Lost Track" combines the wincing detritus of modern industry with an atmosphere of Shinto-like tranquility, reflecting the Japanese paradox of tradition and technology. For the most part, however, it stives too hard to reach beyond allotted boundaries at any cost and exhibits a fascination with technology merely for its own sake.

Susumu Yokota uses his technology to go back to the future. *God, Please And Me* is a shiny, squeaky-clean homage to the edifices of Detroit Techno circa 1990, complete with restless 305 rhythms, leering synth lines and a complete trust in the power of technology that only took isolation from the real world can bring. As a musical approximation of the ideal of Tokyo, it's unerringly accurate. As an immersive listening experience it's pleasant if a little sterile. But how ironic to be able to evoke nostalgia for an age that, theoretically, hasn't even happened yet.

PETER MONTRE

Bloodbath

Lve
PHEANTHROP PRC02 CD

This is the living thing, jazz that's forgot its name, avant garde innovation that doesn't give a damn about being art rock without all the pathetic posturing, improvisation so tight it's silky. Bloodbath's collaging of a diverse range of eclectic musical fragments is as richly inventive as John Zorn, but without Zorn's somewhat cerebral sobriety. This is what we've been waiting for something like Zorn but sexy! Even though I'm infatuated with all things

Tokyo-ish, the recent glut of Japanese noise imports has been a bit bewildering. But this is one that has just been crying out to be released since being recorded live in Tokyo in 1992. The wonder is that it has taken so long. The unfortunately named Bloodbath were a temporary combo centred around Western guitarist John King who included an array of Tokyo's finest — most notably Otomo Yoshiriko on saxophone and what King has described appropriately as "home-made guitars from Mars".

The first track, "Bad Dreams", brings Hendrix's "Wild Thing" into delightfully uncomfortable collision with throbbing funk and thrash-noise. "Waiting For Tanya" is a skite guitar lamentation as sad as any desecrated heart or highway. In "Blues For Marilyn" the immortal line "I wanna be loved by you alone, Boop-boop-be-doo" is wedded to King's halloo of "Here we go" as he thrusts the pouting melody apart with a guitar riff that is as heavy as it is serious. Vocalist Makigami Koichi joins the group for a piece called "Solo Vs Lead" and introduces a sound-poetry splutter of abstract expletives sounding like Charlie Chan meets concrete poet Bob Cobbing with a bottle of Glenlivet thrown in. Later King even turns his hand to a straight-ahead blues but sounds far from straight the way the North-band Bloodbath do it. This all adds up to one of the most invigorating things I've heard in a long while. As King sings over and over "The only thing that really matters is what *fuck* you go!" exactly.

ROBERT CLARK

Bowery Electric

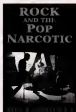
Beat
REGGARS BANQUET BRC02 12E CD

This second album from the splendidly named Bowery Electric comes close to being genre-defining in the amorphous sprawl of current post-rock releases. But it has recognisable structures among its more eclectic samples. Ambient drones and swirls of guitar noise, and on tracks such as "Fear Of Flying" and "Trade Out" these disparate qualities come together with a heavy intensity. Bowery Electric are not the most experimental of groups but their music has a sense of completeness suggesting a firm sense of identity. This, plus a successful incorporation of breakbeats and other samples into the group's sound, gives *Beat* a superior edge. Bowery Electric still cling to some song-based ideals — the murmured vocals of Martha Schwendner and Lawrence Chandler weave themselves around half the tracks — but with nothing particularly recognisable as a traditional verse or chorus.

The rhythmic work keeps the music satisfactorily focused. "Without Stopping" has thrumming drum samples and "Under The Surf" is a rumbling low-end dalliance much in the spirit of the recent Third Eye Foundation norms, while the title track is a sort of mutant

ROLLINS 2.13.61

Henry Rollins
Do I Come Here Often?
(Black Coffee Blues Part I)
New clothbound hardback book
featuring Henry's interviews with
the great and the good of
American music
Published February '97.



Joe Carducci
Rock and the Pop Narcotic
Amazing polemics from the founder of one
of America's most influential 80's
independent record labels — SST Records
This is the most updated edition
Available now



Henry Rollins
Everything
A special price. Rollins speaks word
CD/Cass. Featuring a chapter on Henry's
latest book 'Ten Stories'. The story is by
Richard Allen and Charles Galt. Reviewed
US gate magazine



Matthew Shipp Quartet
Critical Mass
Wine review from '96 — "the whole
album is superb" Shipp explores the
harmonic and melodic possibilities of the
piano, while daily evoking elements of
both jazz & classical music. Free press at us
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soundcheck

drone/hip-hop crossover "Black Light" and "Coming Down" are more formulaic, relying on layers of sound compressed into a sort of dreamlike buzziness, but "Pozoroz" showcases Bowery Electric's ability to take on a more abstract identity. This is a subdued epic of repetitive bass, electronic pulses and phoned drums which ebb and flow accompanied by minimalist note clusters that gradually distort into abstraction. On the strength of the album alone you feel that Bowery Electric have an enormous amount of potential. *Best* is a benchmark album, a definite post-rock signifier.

TONY BRIDGE

Glenn Branca

Songs 77-19
ATMATIC ALP15 CD

Glenn Branca

Lesson No. 1
NEW TONE RECORDS 1032 2 CD

Glenn Branca

Symphony No. 2 (Peak Of The Sacred)
ATMATIC ALP105 CD

Glenn Branca

Symphony No. 5
ATMATIC ALP15 CD

Glenn Branca

The World Upside Down
ATMATIC ALP16 CD

These five CDs span 14 years of Branca's musical output and provide a picture of his developing concerns as well as the foundation from which they grew. *Songs 77-19* is Branca's Punk Rock Years — a mere 30 minutes' worth of material, comprising the only recordings of Branca's songs by his early groups The Static and Theoretical Girls that the connoisseurs "even halfway listenable." This includes the two single releases, some audience cassette recordings and a home cassette demo. In the spirit of the times these remnants hint at a youthful, energetic workout of a variety of ideas. This release and the EP *Lesson No. 1* (for Electric Guitar/Dance) from 1979 — reassured by the Italian New Tone label and shoddily mastered from the original vinyl — are of course value only. Performed by a small rock group, *Lesson No. 1* has the repetitive, gradually building euphoric form that is a feature of more later works destined to pop song length.

Three years later this form would become angelic in the excellent *Symphony No. 2*. Branca was now developing ideas further, in depth and over longer time frames. This piece is performed on the mallet guitars he built specially for the piece, along with "harmonic guitars" on tape, by an ensemble including Lyle Ransick and Thurston Moore. Recorded in a New York City church in 1982 it also features

Kreidler

Weekend
HAT HUNTER 904 CD

Weekend occupies ground lying somewhere between Tortoise's exploratory rhythms and U2's weather link. This Düsseldorf quartet produce some strong grooves, deceptively simple minimalist melodies, and a fully integrated sense of the studio-as-instrument. There's a tendency to view much rock/post-rock instrumental work with a marked prejudice towards improvisation — a legacy of psychedelic jazz and "Sister Ray," of seeking legitimacy through appropriating alien elements (usually freeform jazz and the avant-garde) of the whole notion of open-endedness achieved through improvisatory means. Kreidler represent the flipside to all this, with a marked emphasis on composition and the fitting together of key components to produce music which retains a sense of freedom and openness, but which also possesses a methodical integrity. This isn't a better approach, but it's a different one.

Most interesting is Kreidler's use of editing and samples as instrumentation. On "Shark," for instance, the samples are used quite tidily and set down as percussive elements which complement the live drums. Elsewhere there are clipped beats allied with squelchy electronic sounds and a propulsive hi-hat on "Polaroid" that maintains a tiring, unresolved tension, producing a kind of hypnotic session. Each successive track seems markedly different from its



predecessor, and while Kreidler undoubtedly play to a formula of sorts (they have a recognisable identity), they have the kind of assurance and self-awareness to make the work in different ways, without the need for gratuitous experimentation or an overly academic sterility. *Weekend* engages the body as much as the head, and there's an attractive functionality about all this, as if by so seamlessly integrating style and looks into their music, Kreidler advocate the whole issue of remaining.

TONY BRIDGE

Cassiber

Beauty And The Beast
RCA CD33 CD

Kampec Dolores

Zugo/Flapad
RCA CD33 CD33 CD

Timely pairing from REI, a nucleus of one of Chris Gullen's best projects of yore by his REI supergroup Cassiber which united his redoubtable talents with those of fellow nose composers Christoph Anders, Alfred Harth and Josef Goebbels, and an outing for Hungarian group Kampec Dolores, who prove that the decade plus between the creation of these two recordings hasn't dulled REI's taste for producing some of the most consistently intriguing music around.

Cassiber's improvised suite, which as the sleeve reminds us bellegierously was recorded live and with "very few overdubs", is a thing of fearful beauty. What impresses most is the dialogue which this music creates between conventional rock/pop syntax (such as the bubbling bounce of "Vergessen Sie Dancin'") and experimentation: prepared cassettes and endless blasts of solos and exquisite music-scaping. It should be nonsense, but miraculously it never is. Another gleeful paradox is the sense of virtuosity that results from a complete absence of exemplary instrumental fireworks displays.

This isn't so apparent on *Zugo* by the formidable Kampec Dolores, who have subtly revamped Magyar and Transylvanian folk acoustics (if I imagine) to produce an album of immense promise. It begins in sonic disarray with what sounds like hammer-on bass thud and the slides and glissandos of violin/vocalist

Gabi Kenderesi. The real star of the show, however, is multi-instrumentalist Bela Agoston — a woodland player with ferocious energy, stamina and, I imagine, ears of steel so extreme are some of the sounds he draws from his instruments. Dominated by the 40 minute "Zugo" suite the music also denies its energy from jazz and rock, but unlike the normal European penchant for using jazz as a starting point for loquacious excursions Ulan Gorbarek or all, this is raw-edged Carpathian folk music, galvanising jazz as though it was invading Dostoevsky's castle "Golem" ("Silence"), which is 12 minutes of exactly that, a bit poncey though it's a welcome respite from the roller-coaster dynamics of the foregoing suite. I guarantee, though, that you won't hear any more leopold music than the rustic romp of "Voznasag" ("Water Country") this year. After years of jazz rock for the brain-dead, perhaps these Central Europeans can offer us some jazz rock for the undead.

PAUL STIMP

George Clinton

Greatest Funks! Hits
EMI/WEA 186202 CD

Although this, the unpermitted greatest hits package from the Parliament/P Funking Thing, is certainly in line with George Clinton's legendary buckramism, it is also one of the most utterly redundant records ever released in his heyday. Clinton may have re-recorded songs like "Maggot Brain" or "Red Hot Mama From Louisiana" several times whenever he ran out of ideas, but this project, perpetuated by producer Lou White with the help of George himself was nothing but strip-teasing from its

PIER ENGLAND

inception. It's one thing to try to bleed the music industry dry, quite another to prey upon the apparently deep pockets of reassured fans.

The concept behind *Greatest Funker!* isn't too far from the way that hip-hop names in the business remix some of (Clinton's) classic tracks. In other words, great marketing copy, terrible music. What makes Hip-hop original, radical, revolutionary and just plain good is the way that producers reconfigure existing music with as much dexterity as rappers twist and turn language. Dragging in megastars (at least in the US) like Coolio, Ice Cube, Vanessa Williams, Busta Rhymes, A Tribe Called Quest's Q-Tip, Wu-Tang's Ol' Dirty Bastard and Digital Underground is a bit like getting some schmo like Billy Preston or Al Kooper to do some keyboard noodling on your '70s ode to rock star laazy. The lifestyle may be different, but the results are the same.

Tracks like the Dogs Of The World (a remix of "Atomic Dog" featuring Coolio, or the two mixes of "That Just Knew Deep" with Digital Underground, are reminders in as much as they contain pointless raps, while the straight-ahead tracks, like Fully Extended's mix of "Workshop Connection", merely simplify the groove by streamlining the beats (they all sound like the rhythm track from "Atomic Dog") to agree with the West Coast's easy-on-the-head production style. The biggest travesty here, though, is the falchit job on what may be the greatest groove ever committed to wax, "Flashlight" (the single was been inexplicably thinned out, the bassline turned way down and the raps, especially Of D'Backs', are abysmal). Sounds to me like Sir Nose D'Voidoffunk won his battle to the death with Star Child.

PETER SHAPIRO

Coldcut/DJ Krush

Nightcrawlers
FIGHT/COLDKURUS/CLUTS

NY/NJ: TUNE SW 26 200

These two mix CDs of material from the best label of the blunted beat brigade, Ninja Tune, represent a soundbath between the two opposing schools of ecology that of the smooth, almost imperceptible segue and the more immediate virtuosity of juxtapositional scratch 'n' patch.

Krush's mix of the more Hip-hop-literate wing of the Ninja Tune stable is a classic expression of the first methodology where the beats are aligned lush with one another to prevent bumps and bruises. There are no crossfader antics or wheel of steel balancing acts on display here, just a long string of withdrawn, faded, faded, fugged (fugged tracks of dissonant desangement). There's some great music on offer from DJ Vadim, The Herbaliser and London Funk Allstars (a group whose records don't stand on their own two feet, but the mixed context, especially one as lush/loose as this, brings their DJ tools to life), but tellingly, Krush's 19 tracks feature only six artists (three of whom contribute only

one track each) and the one-sidedness duels its impact — also being lit over the head with a blunt instrument.

Coldcut, meanwhile, unlike 23 tracks from 16 artists in their well-executed turntable collage of scratched, stripped and desecrated beats. Tracks like DJ Food's *The Breaks Of Wrath*, EVA's "Oddy Godly" and DJ Vadim's *The Breaks* have been hacked at and scraped dry to re-volute rhythm's bodily connotation towards parched texture. Although not as wide-ranging as their *Journeys By DJ* mix, Coldcut *Food Fight* goes some way towards justifying their "broadest beats in London" claim by moving from Coldcut's own ultra-Ambient version of "Autumn Leaves", through apocalyptic Squaresphere-style drum 'n' bass from Cabbage Boy, to the cut-up jazzcore dynamics of The Herbaliser's "Hi Chrome: Has The Rain". Despite the fact that the beats are more brittle and less funky and the sound even sparser than Krush's, Coldcut manage to inject a sense of levity into the proceedings. The only problem is that the "tricky" isn't as much fun as the promised food fight.

PETER SHAPIRO

Dabao

From The Ghetto
TRIPLE EARTH 115 115 CD

Suns Of Arqa

Artemian
ARKA 21 10 CD

Choying Drolma/Steve Tibbetts

Cbo
HARBIN/HV 1404 CD

The first sound to be heard on Dabao's album is that of can being crushed in a large Venezuelan mortar called a pilon. Over this rhythmic base Maria Plasencia sings "Canto Del Pilon", a traditional Afro-Venezuelan work song in a cunning arrangement which drifts gently into soft-rock, splashed with the colours of hers caddis and children laughing. The track was a hit in Venezuela for Dabao — the vehicle for Californian soundtrack composer Frank Harris and his friends.

The rest of the album feels tagged on to the hit. Harris, working very economically, does most of the playing himself and adds a range of tropical exotica to his Latin-tinged ditties, from steel pans or a charming Brazilian tibia to the laughter of the *Daba Lento*. It's a belated handball of a record, easygoing and unpretentious. But on some of Frank's own songs the crossover from pop to pop is too eagerly embraced, and all the sars, tablas and thump pianos can't cover up Dabao's unhealthy love affair with MOR rock.

If Frank Harris shakes you by the hand, then *Suns Of Arqa* thrusts a spiff at you and disdains all over your personal space. It would be silly to dismiss *Artemian*, a live album, as a bunch of sprawling jams by a collective of

hippies nouveau. In fact, that's how I will dismiss it. After this seemingly endless litany of raga-meets-ragga (let us be reminded as a field after the festival has moved on) Rumbling stars, full-hearted toasters, a guest didgeridoo player — you name it, the Suns have tossed it into their classically phobic mix. Occasionally the music leaves into life with all the rhythmic subtlety of a lousy castle. But once vocalists Angel starts howling "I hear the call, let wisdom flow through you" all you can do is hide. A Home Secretary's worst nightmare.

Choying Drolma is a twentysomething Tibetan ex-patriate who lives in a small nunnery in the Nepalese hills above Kathmandu. She has a fabulous voice, relaxed and perfectly centred, like a lower-pitched Maria Sebestyen. She sings solo songs from the Tibetan religious tradition, and chants contemplative texts along with her fellow nuns. It's a gentle sound, like a more airborne Grigorian chant.

One is the result of Steve Tibbetts adding instruments, mainly guitar, to the recordings of Choying's singing. Tibbetts appears courtesy of ECM, apparently, and there are similarities with Jan Garbarek's ECM collaboration with The Hilliard Ensemble (offspring). Tibbetts uses his guitar with immense delicacy, like a penbrush in fact, creating washes of colour and shadow behind and around the singing. As the musical scenery shifts around them, the nuns seem to sound different — sometimes Irish or East European. Once your ear becomes accustomed to the address of accompanying Tibetan chanting with an electric guitar the music starts to feel quite natural. Tibbetts always strives to enhance the singing and not draw attention to himself. I can imagine another album in which the low, raucous chanting of Tibetan monks plus their bellowing horns engage in head-on collision with loud, distorted guitar. But this is not that album, and is far more refined than anything I would imagine.

CLIVE BELL

Michael Finnissey

Red Earth
MHC 00475 CD

Anthony Payne

Time's Arrow
MHC 00375 CD

MHC's CD singles aren't designed for FM airplay, and Michael Finnissey's Red Earth features some of the toughest music on the contemporary music label. This is a young-face New Complexity, that it's dense, forbidding and often violent goes with the territory. Yet both composers on these latest singles tend to define themselves in relation to the user-friendly English pastoral tradition. The catalyst for Finnissey's 1988 composition was his vision of the "raw landscape" of central Australia, which, argues (as Pagan's skeletoons), is at odds with the cosy view of nature portrayed by the



René Lussier





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Trans Am
Brigatin The Corners
 (CORINO NRG031) CD

Trans Am
Surrender To The Night
 (CRY SLAM) EA 04988-2/269 CD

Looking back on Pavement's sloppy beginnings — and middle-aged alcoholic drummer — how would he be so much on their becoming a big group on the edge of the mainstream. The slowest momentum of their earlier work is still preserved on *Brigatin The Corners*, but now a lot of the delicate edges are smoothed out and nicely buffed up. The songs sound better with a frame around them. Whereas they used to sprawl over the edge of the canvas, they're now held in check. The group keep to their approach of the last few years — showing how with a bit of effort the square peg can be jammed into the round hole. And the surprise highlight here is the melancholic, melatonin-riddled "Transpop Is Arranged."

Vocalist Steve Maler's freewheeling stream of non sequiturs, the metric running over from one line to the next, gives the tunes their irregular shape. At times, like mid-60s Dylan, he just uses language in the way it rhymes, occasionally resulting in stinkers like "Let's thank the King/You've been such a great host/The road/We

just so perfectly prepared/Now I know you care." But he can throw in some great touches as on "Stereo" the lines "What about the voice of Gekki Lee! How did he get so high/Does he speak like an ordinary guy?" are injected as though he was so distracted by memories of Rush's former king of prog rock castrati that he just had to tell us mid-song.

Conspicuous instrumental Trans Am have changed tack since their inception, and more radically, too. They were once a 'minor' rock group, but are now a minorer between Kraftwerk-influenced Electro-progres, loops of rock and the grooves of Can via Tortoise. Many years ago Techno-rock would have been a derogatory term for excessively technical displays of musicianship. Now, exemplified by Trans Am's straddling of genres, it means something very different. And it's a very accurate description. They're just as comfortable with real drums, drum pads, twisted drums and software drums and they apply this all-embracing ethos to the other instruments. This ability to cross over is exemplified by the inclusion of their 12" "Kiss/My Regal A/S" in the Electronics category of The Wire's records of '96.

Trans Am's music is all about shape and structure, with both their electronic pieces and their 'real' instrument rock taking their rhythmic form from layered, grid-like patterns. It's intriguing to think where they might go next — they cover such a wide musical area that they'd probably even if they stay where they are.

PINK BADGERS

Peter Hammill
Sorax
 REI RE 9114 CD

David Jackson
Fractal Bridge
 REI RE 9113 CD

The CD reissue of *Loops And Riffs* (Fie!) in 1993 served as a reminder to those who needed reminding that Peter Hammill's compositional talents stretch beyond songcraft into studio tapwork. Some, a smolder collection of instrumentals (1994-95), includes film and

dance commissions. Four soundtrack pieces for Michel Sironi's *Ermene-Ne* by Hammill's distinctive feel for brooding, late-night moodiness, encapsulated here by the veiled and wistful playing of Stuart Gordon. They all work splendidly as mood measures independently of the music. Elsewhere, "Dark Matter" manipulates Hammill's free electric guitar playing, compressing it into a narrow dynamic band and recorded at a level lower than the ferocity of the playing would normally suggest. Hammill has long been a fan of Hendrix and there are hints of that here. "Four To The Floor" suffuses relentless pulse with peripheral waves and subtle distortions, while "Exercise For Louts" evokes an eerie processional mood. On the lengthy (26 minutes) "Labyrinthine Dreams", fragile thematic material — a gentle play of cadences — is interspersed with polyrhythmic MIDI player-piano sections, but it's a touch too obviously in the manner of Hince and Bitch. Originally written for dancers it seems overstrained without them. Nevertheless this is a stimulating and revealing collection, and Hammill does exceptionally well to bring an overall album-cohesion to the disparate strands of his instrumental work. It should suit a variety of tastes from industrial through Electronica to Ambient.

Beyond the small but dedicated Hammill/Van Der Graaf Generator fanbase, David Jackson is still an appealingly under-recognised saxophonist and flautist who blends inspiration from jazz, rock and folk idioms with seamless ease. *Fractal Bridge* showcases the subtle gestures of his improvising. The emotional clarity of tone and cool elegance of phrasing are sometimes reminiscent of Jan Garbarek, especially an "Echo Soundbeam", "Aloesia" and "Songline". Jackson's duo partner is the interactive, ultra-sonic MIDI instrument Soundbeam (a sort of computerised descendant of the theremin) which he began working with several years ago in the kind of Music Therapy. Soundbeam emits sounds in response to Jackson's movements within the beams. Jackson then responds to Soundbeam's soundscapes, rhythms and tone-clusters. Advised programming determines the degree of unpredictability and complexity you want from this instrument. Repeated listening reveals the depth of Jackson's understanding of its sophistication and versatility. It's one of the most poignant and absorbing dialogues that I've heard between man and machine.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

id battery
Lily Events
 UNK UNK TAVEN NO NUMBER CD

I have a photograph of a ten million volt electron accelerator at Berkeley, California. It's a vast tunnel full of glowing bronze pipes, and in the distance stands a man in a suit, listening perhaps as his electrons accelerate. I think it was built around 30 years ago, but listening to

English postcardists [true of the minor ones maybe, but Tupper, Vaughan Williams?] But its meaning is more universal. The "Isling" sound of the album's makes a compelling appearance near the end, though a Roll Hems cover of Red Earth looks unlikely.

Finnissy's enormous output is very diverse, and he has become an outspoken, even angry, modern composer. Anthony Payne has a lower profile, but though *Trans Am* is more in the modernist tradition's vision is even more apocalyptic. Payne, a near contemporary of Maxwell Davies and Britten, is a generation older than Finnissy

and has tried to reconcile avant-garde with the pastoral tradition apparently despised by the latter. *Trans Am* from 1990 is a Pomes commission. The concept is the "Big Bang" — the universe expands, slows down and finally contracts. In complete contrast to Finnissy there are unifying themes — a persistent bass motif, swirling patterns on woodwind — and the music is much more accessible. At around 25 minutes in length and nearing its budget price, this releases continue NMC's welcome and ingenious promotional strategy for new British music.

ANDY HAPPEL

id battery made me search out the picture, because this album feels like field recordings from some California netherworld of tangible electricity rattle and hums from the cutting edge technology of a previous generation. The recordings have an aura around them to do with real large-scale locations, as opposed to studio-created simulacra. The musicians have largely obliterated themselves from the stage, and their activities are mysterious, but the results are a range of seething textures, and the aerial equivalent of a Northern Lights display hanging miles above you in this air.

id battery is a project started in 1994 by two antipodes/drummer types, Brandon LaBelle in LA and Loren Chase in San Francisco. They connect with Steve Rodia's in the Tween Nasse, journals, Erik and Ernst Books, and groups Farfugle and Ohm Revelator. Both are drummers, but use contact mics, and they have worked on art installations where buildings themselves are employed as instruments. In Britain a similar terrain is explored by David Jackman's Organum and sound sculptor Max Eastley. But id battery have this particularly poetic attitude to the sound of electricity. Occasionally the machines overload and howl above deeply embedded rhythms, more often there's a gentle atmosphere, metal percussion hovers on the brink of audibility, like a dream of gamelan. Or a deep, pulsing voltage — the sound of turbines making love.

CLIVE BELL

Keith Jarrett

Mysteries: The Impulse Years 1975-78

IMPULSE PPD-4-183-4CD

Jarrett enters the archives. This is, as far as I know, the first fully documented, alternate-takes-included box set of recordings by the pianist and composer. It includes some of the finest Jarrett on record, with the greatest group he has led: Keith Haden (bass), Paul Motian (drums) and Dewey Redman on tenor, in the days before he was better-known as "father of Joshua Redman" (son of the jazz titan) — the gritty individual Dewey is a far more radical stylist than Joshua. Of the four albums in this set, *Shades and Mysteries* were recorded in one session in 1975, *Mybelle* and *Box-Be* a year later — the first two adding Guilherme Franco on percussion. The group broke up shortly after, and Jarrett formed his "European Quartet" with Jan Garbarek (the useful sleeve-note points out that these bands didn't overlap, as was sometimes thought).

Though I've always loved these albums — *Mysteries* was the first jazz record I bought — critical snippets kept me from giving full regard to Jarrett's genius. But if his undoubted egomaniac can sometimes tip into excess, there are many other occasions where he triumphs. The hallmark of his compositions is an intensely rhapsodic lyricism which his improvisations seamlessly develop. The sleeve-notes rightly draw attention to the Ornette Coleman connection. Charlie Haden

and Dewey Redman played for both leaders, of course, and there are times — for instance, when the piano drops out on "Riotous" — when the music has the clear sound of Ornette. But there are limits to how far that influence can convey itself on the piano, and Jarrett draws together many styles, from rock and Country music, as well as the jazz pantheon of B4 Evans, in a unique synthesis.

It's been a long wait for these albums to appear complete on CD, but they now come with the bonus of several alternate takes. Jarrett comments: "It won't be that one take is that much better, but they really are quite different." Of course, part of the problem of assessing the new material is that the air is so attuned to the original. But in most cases I reckon they chose right first time round. "Everything That Loves Lamented", a poignant fragment of melancholy in Latin rhythm developed beautifully over many choruses, has a less lyrical and coherent alternate take. But in the gorgeously lyrical, waltz-time

"Rainbow" the alternate version approaches the issued take in quality. *Residue of the year?*

ANDY HAMILTON

Arthur Jarvinen/The California Ear Unit

Eddie Black Ink
OO BECS CD 28 CD

The California Ear Unit is an appealing group of virtuoso concert musicians with a clean, almost folkly sound. The basic seven-piece line-up consists of piano plus two each of winds, strings and percussion. The Unit has worked closely with Elliott Carter and Terry Riley and commissioned new works from John Adams and Louis Andriessen.

This album is a showcase for work written over the period 1988-1991 by Jarvinen, one of the percussionists, and he's certainly used plenty of black ink in its creation.

The composer also plays less guitar and harmonica, and three of the pieces, including the title track, are short duets for bass and guitar played by Jarvinen with non-unit member Peter Zalleros. Ensemble pieces include *Clean Your Gun*, full of repetitive, jerky melodic lines, and *The Paces Of Yu*, a sparse percussion-dominated 19 minute opus that recalls American experimentalists of an earlier generation. Best of the bunch is the four-part *The Vulture's Garden* which links the album off with spectacular union ensemble playing, branches into well-crafted counterpoint (with a hint of *The Soldier's Tale*), a slow, drone-heavy third movement and a final section with extensive counterpoint — neat, interlocking systems figures and interruptions from a subtly brutal and figure.

Murphy-Nights is a potentially thrilling tour de force, a piece made of overlapping, asynchronous riffs and long melodies undermined by some poor improvisation and, like most of the set, artless production. *The Queen Of Spain* is a "clever" writing exercise for keyboards and percussion that uses more

horrible home-synth patches without any apparent irony. The overall sound of *Eddie Black Ink* is a puzzle: is the audio quality the consequence of a regrettably tiny budget or a deliberate cultivation of naïf sounds?

Musicians such as Andriessen, Aphex Twin, Tom Waits and labelmaker have found ways to use 'ugly' sounds — sometimes as a kind of policy statement — but this work cries out for richer, funkier textures.

Jarvinen has crammed a total of 66 minutes on to this disc, but the impression is of a collection of scores dumped to tape — of publisher's demos rather than pieces — of performances. Maybe he just wanted to get the stuff out into the public arena, but his reputation would be better served by a smaller number of better realised pieces. Perhaps there was a touch of red-light anxiety in the recording and mixing studios.

JOHN L. WALTERS

John Law Trio

Cham Leaves (Autumn Steps)
MRB 12-40756 CD

GP Hall

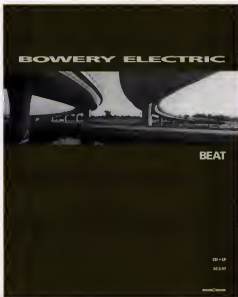
Figures Of Imagination
MRB 31-40756 CD

Two releases from the tiny (even by UK jazz/improv standards) Future Music (FMR) label. Jazz pianist and composer John Law has

an unusual background. Desilenced with studies in Schoenberg and Stockhausen his career was reborn when he abandoned classical music for jazz (see *Bios*, *The Wire* 195). Yet he just playing in a number of contexts — free piano trio, structured solo improvisation — carries signs of his classical origins, in a concern with form and exploring new sonorities. *Cham Leaves* follows on from *The Orchestral*, a Thelemic Monk tribute with the same personnel. Tim Wells is on bass and Paul Davis on percussion — the latter best-known for his work with John Harle, especially on the heroic *Last Night Of The Proms* performance of Berlioz's *Paris*.

"*Giant (Steps)*" and "*Autumn Leaves*" really are deconstructions — lengthy, fractured, oblique — of these jazz monoliths. But the most interesting tracks are the shorter ones with their sparing prepared piano effects. The heart of the album is the wheezing, clattering, wene "*Sarabande*" for John Stevens, the British drummer who died much too young (I'm not sure of the connection with the baroque dance form, but the concept is a brilliant one, maybe not quite fully realised. The out-of-tempo "*Song Of The Whistful One*" is short but very poignant.

GP Hall is not a name known to me. A (lesser?) guitarist with a passion for flamenco, he reckons he pioneered 'world' or 'ethnic' flamenco jazz ahead of its time." Yet the music from this hodge-podge of a collection is very much of its time. Tracks date



Sonny Simmons

Transcendence
GRP 115 CD

Sonny Simmons

Judgment Day
GRP 118 CD

Altogether Sonny Simmons is a legend. In 1963 he appeared on *Soundcheck* with Coltrane's classic rhythm section (Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones). In 1966 he recorded two albums — *Staying On The Watch and Music From The Spheres* — for ESP, the tiny New York label whose roster included Ornette Coleman, The Fugs, William Burroughs and 'Sun Ra'. Since then his recorded output has been sporadic. Now GRP's *Creative Improvised Music Projects* realize his righteous flame to burn again. Both discs feature Charles Moffett, drummer in the vestigial Ornette Coleman Trio of the mid-60s, and reedman Michael Marcus, who sounds like a younger player. Both albums are recorded in OMPS (omit what they played-is-what-you-get) vein.

Transcendence is a live recording. Moffett is placed stereo-center. Marcus plays strich, a straight alto sax with a whirling Arabic sound. On "Mushroom Reels" the complexities are mind-spinning. The saxos engage in simultaneous and separate dialogue with Moffett's deceptively simple New Orleans backbeats negotiating their fecklessly-argued lines. At first Marcus seems to outplay Simmons. His figures are brighter and more delectable. "Gerardine's



Ornette is unaccompanied Simmons, an affecting, melancholic reverb prodded by a tough jazz sense of harmony. By "Nuclear Fusion" you can hear Simmons thinking in his solo: the internal consistency of jazz logic is pitched against chaotic fragmentation. On the sax-drums duet "Lost Village Of Ur" Tombey Simmons is not faith — his sound is nasal and somber, the intervals between his notes respected and obsessive — but the

long, persuasive solo transcends technical fireworks. Simmons speaks to us, and there really is no greater power.

Judgment Day adds Steve Niel, the understudy bassist who has played with Johnny "Guitar" Watson and Pharoah Sanders among others. His notes have the solid dexterity that makes the bass a drum (he can also sound like a West African kora). On "Honk Hawk" Simmons draws a bristling line into the heart of the ensemble sound. We listen to the total music rather than merely applaud his chops. The statement of the tune catches the obscure misty and blossoming potential Coleman achieved on his Free Jazz double-quartet album *pentecost* with petals. "Waltz For Joe" sets up a lovely discovered rhythm between bass, drum and cymbals; the tune itself is staid with rare charm. "The Call For Old Souls" uses Coltrane's key changes to divide the music into sections, but Simmons avoids the temptation of music to labor and stays true to his freest, cubebowed tone. On "Ascension" Marcus hits his most satisfying groove, and Niel and Moffett are particularly sharp and hospitable.

Rather than also, Simmons plays tenor on *Judgment Day*. His intonations explain why "The music here represents a time of Great Spiritual Depression. The world will be judged by the Sound of Holy Music." It has been said, among some musicians, I can't play. So I am settling the score to silence these egotistic bastards for all time. No bluster, just truth. His mightily impressed

REN WATSON

Gary Lucas

Evangeline
JVC/SAC 2152 CD

Urfaust & Gary Lucas

The Chabot Of Prague
FAUST RR 06-2391 CD

In his note to the first track on his solo guitar album *Evangeline*, Gary Lucas says "I just want to give you an orgasm with the guitar." Unlike many guitarists, who would rely on either speed or power in attempting such a task, Lucas prefers nuanced stimulation and the element of surprise, though power and speed are certainly part of his repertoire. In a long, underappreciated career which has seen him working closely with such disparate souls as Leonard Bernstein, Captain Beefheart, The Woodentops, Jon Langford (McDonald), Tony Mamorne (Pere Ubu), Jeff Buckley and Joan Osborne, Lucas has, not surprisingly, demonstrated an equally hard-to-categorize versatility on his own albums. But it will be hard to top *Evangeline*'s mix of material for diversity. Two Wagner arrangements, two mid-century Chinese pop songs, Blind Blake's "Police Dog Blues", Sun Ra's "Interstellar Low Ways" and Lalo Schifrin's title theme from

Cool Hand Luke share the disc with Lucas's own quirky, often very compositions which are equally likely to draw on acoustic blues styles, freed psychedelia, Appalachian Country traditions, fast-cut Ambient, as well as his uniquely spacy sounds built up from flutes, delay and other effects fed through a self-designed single of cables and effects boxes. To call this album acoustic, which he does, is merely to denote that he doesn't use his trusty 1963 Steinbocker tube. Electricity is an integral part of his sound, and nobody else has ever used a 1920s National Steel Dueton or a 1946 Gibson J-45 quite like this. That one man can make the overtone to Tannhäuser sound as full and majestic as it does here is sufficient demonstration of his talent. And his occasional vocals sound much less self-conscious now, not so affected.

Those longing for Lucas's Strat work have another option. The album with the Czech group Urfaust places Lucas's virtuosity and some palette in a more conventional Prog rockish setting. Lucas tips off some shredding runs that would make any Heavy Metal guitarist proud, though hardly any would think of them, and adds his shimmering chord-clouds in spots. On this occasion, at least, Urfaust is a ten-piece group including horns and multiple violas singing mostly English lyrics. The music's not particularly original aside from Lucas's contribution, but the overall effect is evocative until the supremely annoying cut-ups of the final track, which are best skipped.

STEVE HOLZ

René Lussier

Trois Histoires
DAVE AH 041 CD

René Lussier

En Du Transil (Version 1)
DAVE AH 000 CD

René Lussier/Robert M

Lepege
Charts Et Danzes Du Monde

INAMENÉ
DAVE AH 001 CD

The flute can have a hard time in new music. So it's a pleasure to discover "Les Histoires" ("Glammy Histoires"), an interesting record and musical piece that flautist Jean Derome commissioned from Canadian guitarist/composer René Lussier and which is included on *Trois Histoires*. This work bursts with ideas and shows off Derome's skills while keeping up the interest. There are synthesizers and turntables and strange, beguiling sonic details in addition to the more obviously identifiable flutes, speech and guitars. I guess we should call it an electroacoustic work, for it's unequivocally the product of a recording studio, but the 18 minute piece sounds a lot more fun than the tag often implies.

René Lussier is best known as a guitarist, one of those indefatigable characters who

from 1974 to 1995 — which proves too broad a span to generate much coherence. The most interesting work is by other players — notably saxophonist Lou Corbelli, who would sound better without his clattering or improviser's guitar and percussion background. With the first track, "Saw Mill Adage", Hill moves into free improvisation with Jeff Cyll on bass and Paul Rutherford on trombone. Maybe I'm missing something but there just doesn't seem a lot to grab the attention here.

ANDY HAMILTON

Edvard Graham Lewis

pre>HE
who won CD

My perception of Graham Lewis has forever been distorted by the strange behaviour of a former flatmate and fellow group member. He was a Wire nut and so obsessed with Lewis that he dressed similarly, bought the same bass guitar and played in the same style, was convinced he looked like him, smoked the same brand of cigarettes, drank the same kind of beer, even ended up taking like him. We were evicted. No doubt he'd have liked this album.

Although it would have caused an uncomfortable personal feedback, it's a shame that Lewis's arrogant, aloof vocal tones aren't featured for more than short snippets on this record. As the title suggests, the record features recordings which precede Lewis's *He Said* albums. In 1986, three years after this music, Lewis's *Said* came up with Hol, an excellent record with Lewis going solo, producing a cacophonous, kaleidoscopic avant pop album. This is altogether less digestible.

The 18 minute opening track, "Dolks Volpfer", ostensibly an exercise in loop modulation, is simply bonkers. It sounds uncannily like one of Aphex Twin's more outrageous experiments and boasts a length that has seen it included on Aphex-like bloody-mindedness. Especially when set against the stark, spacial beauty of the following "Front, Back And Profile" and the restless timbres and twisted voice of "He Said Again". Where Lewis is truly original, as with fellow ex-Wire inmate Bruce Girdle, is with his processing of sound into grotesque unrecognised patterns. The unsettling "Lying In State" was music for an installation project with Gilbert and Russell Mills but it sounds like a processional forbidding and utterly alien.

PINK BARNES

turn up all over the place — improvising with Fred Frith, Tom Cora or Chris Gutter, playing with electroacoustic composer Giles Gobeil (who helped out with "Glammy Hands"), writing theatre music, fronting groups. It's hard not to be impressed by his talent and energy. He reminds me a bit of Billy Jenkins. Like Jenkins, Luser's manager manages to keep serious musical intent, musical humour and plain silliness in a nicely tuned equilibrium.

Trax Hazzors is a collection of three baggy "concept" pieces. In addition to "Glammy Hands" there's another epic, "Art Brut," a sort of homage to an unknown artist, which includes some dazzling acoustic guitar playing among all the dramatic "radio-genic" noises and spatial transformations. The third piece, "Black Rock," commissioned by fellow Canadian guitarist Tim Brady (it has already turned up on one of Brady's own albums), has a strong documentary thread which ends with a stadium snatch of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" sung by Brian Mulroney and Rexdale Irving, while Brady comes over all Jim Henson. Yet guitar improvisers never dominate the sound world of Trax Hazzors. Luser's musical generosity and originality shine through every segment and the pieces whizz by in a flash.

Fin Du Traxal (Version 1) hovers up some old recordings of theatre music (1980-83) and casts an interesting light on Luser's later work. The cues are surprisingly disciplined, with a European flavour and a touch of 1970s art rock played by a medium-sized and relatively low-tech ensemble that again includes Derrone. An interesting bit of tape-coupled clearing.

Chants Et Danses Du Monde Interne features Robert M. Lapage playing cello and alto sax in (it's likely) largely improvised duos with Luser's guitar. There are seven pieces from 1984 and nine from last year with titles such as "Rab Frostie" and "L'Art De Remplir Des Boîtes." The lengthy skewerpieces by Lapage look as though they might be very funny, but my French isn't good enough.

JOHN L. WALTERS

Loren Mazzacane

Long Nights

TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS 20 CALIFORNIA CD

While no one could really accuse them of being any risks, Table Of The Elements are certainly doing a great job of documenting the best of the decade's sound-thinkers and outward-bound musicians. With Keg Hano, Richard Youngs (a resusc of Advent is apparently on the cards), Gale Faux, Zena Parks and Tony Conrad releases under their belt, Loren Mazzacane seemed an obvious omission.

Mazzacane is an American original in much the same sense as John Fahey or Janek. In that he's chosen a classically American form, in this case the blues, and in true pioneer spirit taken it off somewhere else, crossed it with other forms (improv, even Kraut-space rock)

and shaped it into a uniquely individual vision of the modern American myth. *Long Nights* consists of five pieces for solo guitar, the highlight of which is the first track, an exquisite and tremulous nodding of what sounds like a beautiful old Scottish folk song, each note aching and ringing with the quality of true speech and genuine soul-communication. Mazzacane's guitar attack ranges from righteous plucking to the saddest of damp twinks — the breadth of his vocabulary is almost Hansi-esque, such is his command of his instrument.

While every Mazzacane piece implies the working through of a certain idea or concept, it's hard to pinpoint what *Long Nights* is all about. Its desperate, sad passages and "last chance" feel all contribute towards the atmosphere of a relationship ending — it's all late-night conversations and reminiscences, despondence and bliss.

Elsewhere, hoarse bewitch feedback sees Mazzacane's solo guitar healing for the lonely northern via pop guitar and other-note leads and eventually his forefinger forgets with the form of the last piece. All in all, *Long Nights* is a startling experience. Mazzacane has created a singularly expressive and unique musical vocabulary. In short, he still sounds like no one else.

DAVID KIRKMAN

Thurston Moore/Tom Sausal/William Winant

Piece For Jesus Dolma
VICTO VICTORY DMS CD

Thurston Moore with Tom Sausal

Not Me
FOURTH DIMENSION FOTEN ST 57

Jim Sauter/Don Dietrich/Thurston Moore

Barefoot In The Field
POCKET EXPOSURE RE 015 CD

Three releases that highlight Sonic Youth guitarist Thurston Moore's parallel career in the field of improv. Piece For Jesus Dolma is a semi-improvised work which Moore performed as part of the Musique Actuelle festival in Victoriaville, Canada, accompanied by long-term sparring partner (and Blue Humer) Tom Sausal and new collaborator William Winant on percussion. Winant himself brings some pretty heavyweight credentials with him, having played with the likes of Anthony Braxton and John Cage in his time, and this recording was apparently the first occasion the trio ever played together. Not that there are any technical problems, from the get-go everything falls into (or out of) place. Beginning with the lonesome sound of a bowed cymbal, Thurston's guitar attack comes in spurts — his playing seems so gentle, rubbing the strings into a dissolve of spiky guitar tones beneath a hand-picked percussion. On

the whole Moore's playing remains static and horizontal — short of a fall-back on conventional dynamics, the "bells" are much more intentional in intent and effect, tying in nicely with Thurston's dedication to Jesus Dolma (Tibetan Buddhists' sole female deity) with all its devotional, intuitive and magical repercussions. Also of note is the crowd's response, with people screaming and cheering all the way through the piece (someone even shouts "I love you" at Thurston). It's like momentarily entering some alternative Utopia where all the kids go wild over hardcore improv.

It could happen, and if the kids need any more convincing then they should search out the Not Me 10" on Fourth Dimension, the latest instalment in a limited series which has already featured the likes of Simon Wickham-Smith, Richard Youngs and Asenon's Stefan Jaworzyński. Here, Sausal and Moore are back "at it", naked and alone, surrounded by the hum of distant feedback whine, punctuated as it should be, with sudden string-slip and machine-gun aware action. Righteous rage.

Barefoot In The Field is a result of an early peak in car-crash aesthetics and anti-dynamic guitar moves for the NYC underground. Thurston seems to be bending more actual "playing" than he intends to these days, but then again, caught in the virtual wind tunnel summoned up by the horns of Sauter and Dietrich (of Borbetomagus), sounding like a train is perhaps the only sensible option.

DAVID KIRKMAN

Butch Morris/Le Quan Ninh/JA Deane

Burning Cloud
RMP CD77 CD

Biosintes

The First Take
RMP CD80 CD

Bernhard Arndt

Islands In Sight
RMP DWA-90005 CD

Butch Morris is perhaps currently best known for his Conductions open, conducted compositions for large groups of improvisers. He is, however, also a free improvising concert player with a history of pushing the jazz tradition. This CD brings his together with electronically-expanded trombonist JA Deane and the French-based French percussionist Le Quan Ninh. All three players employ extraordinary sonic palettes. Ninh, who doubles as a performer of contemporary classical works (Dierkes, Cage and the like), plays largely metal percussion in a way that emphasises texture rather than metre. Smiler's, Deane's electronic contributions act as multi-coloured backdrops. Together they weave a shifting canvas of time, space and timbre which is open and expansive. Whether or not intentional — and the track tells hint at this possibility — Burning Cloud with its

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Various Artists

Return Of The DJ Volume 2
 various artists 100% 2 CD's

It's tempting to use this energetic album as an unsuspended leg to trip the feeble evils of downtempo beats, but that's not a charitable impulse, and I don't think it should be adopted. It's hard to pick on heads who fall by loving original HipHop too much, and don't feel like they can get their hands dirty with it. *Return Of The DJ Volume 2* is a global symphony of dirty, dusty records that are shelved and recovered in these times aren't treated as holy writs but as water balloons: the more you throw, the wetter you get.

The cutting is to Swiss standards, the transitions often jaw-droppingly unpredictable and the beds of looped rhythms are actively funky, restoring some of HipHop's sadly estranged physical essence. (Why did sort-of-funky replace funky as the syntax for beats anyway? So that the users who stand around at rock shows could stand around in clubs?) Where DJ-producers like Shadow emphasize the viscosity of the cursor, straining layers of samples which they ornament with scratching, these DJs tip the balance, making their major formal gestures with the stylus and leaving the looped samples to simply hold up the table. "Fat Chests" is a blowing fest for DJ Rutledge, who digs straight for the sensual with his Slanters, waiting for the perfect 32nd-note syncopation. "X-Phen Style Beat" showcases Rock-Rodion's pumper-funkie using just two samples, but once a blast, opening up its space and changing its time signature. (Sometimes with the gloves in one setting.) It's a good-refined funk-you to the quartering hand at the sequencer and a new way of returning darkness to HipHop's sense of misadventure. Bada calls together an entire track using his hand-drawn techniques, but other tracks also feature strictly vinyl breakdowns (like the clever morphing of a Run-DMC record from 4/4 to 3/4 in Kid Koala's "Slick's Walk").

There's a cheeky gleam in scratching and many artists can scratch phenomenally, sometimes bringing to mind achievements in sports rather than music. Kid DJ EQ turns stylus into catchy loops on "Hide Your Weirdest When We Come Through". The purple "Private Parts" motors on the trebles "Give It Up (It's Loose)" break (with a loop from Moby's Valentine's "Soul"), of all things, riding shotgun and clearing traffic with a vocally phased scotch of something



humble and sexy. Requisite naughty samples will tickle shut-ins but don't do much for the ladies (in my tiny random sample).

Old School references abound, with tracks like "It's Your Rock" and "Change The Beat" popping up in the latter. Beyond There's "The Positive Step" even gives a nod to Genesis. Verse 1 — "Good Times" and "Adventures On The Wheels Of Steel" — with its closing loop. X-Trips "Rockstar" rouses Black Sabbath, AC/DC and "King Of Rock" with headnodding scratching to funk-up effect. Nowadays a track like this wouldn't be saved enough to get a summation, but once upon a time rock records were fair game for sampling. Puzzling Loucas Of Today's HipHop Number 23.

SASHA FREE-JONES

complex beauty, sense of space and frequently plaintive quality can be read as an elegy for the natural world. Highly recommended.

The First Take is a recording by Tuvan three-piece. Besides their last concert during their short touring life (1991-94), it combines elements of Tibetan Buddhist and shamanic tradition such as folk tunes, overtone singing and charmed, gentle mood pieces descriptive of the rural landscape with the stylistic disjunctions and chaotic free associations of improvised music. If their crude, bare, small-scale improvisations (which make up part of this date) try the patience of the active urban mind, they also speak of a simpler culture where communication is localised and less mediated. On one track the group is joined by the remarkable Tuvan singer Senkhio Nemchik, already familiar to many from her integration into the global improvising fraternity.

Bernhard Arndt's solo piano album is a showcase for his variety of electronic extensions and manual sound explorations. Perhaps there's a just too much material on this album, after a while you feel Bernhard is having to push the same tricks and this amplified ghostly resonance of the piece's insides has a steep-deepening effect. There's no denying Bernhard's acute command of the keyboard: the deft deployment of preparations and interaction with his electronics. But the music has a limited

emotional range and depth. For my taste it's too romantic and too comfortable.

PHIL ENGLAND

Gary Moscholes

Slapped To Make Your Life Easier
 SLAP 001 1 CD

Gary Moscholes is yet another cartoonish guide for Mike Paradinas, the man behind a-z, Tusken Raiders, Jake Sizzler and Kid Spaz. Slapped To Make Your Life Easier takes the same grating, spoiled, brat, in-evi-capable-of-taking-anthing-seriously approach and the same rinky-dink keyboard sound that he uses on his Electronics records, and applies them to jazz beats, funk samples, disco soundbites and Easy Listening motifs.

When he's not using his trademark crunching drum sounds or his once refreshing, now humdrum, analogic ambience, Paradinas sounds like someone who's trying way too hard to be funny. *Slapped To Make Your Life Easier* is no exception: most of the time, the jokes fall flat on their backs, when they do work the attitude is so annoying that you don't want to laugh. The brunt of most of these jokes is an (un)justified composite portrait of a snoring, permed, polyester-dad '70s swinger lounging around or dancing in the mirror to his Roy Ayers and Isaac Hayes records. Of course, this character has been parodied to death recently (by everyone from Henry Field to

The Beehive boys and the credit sequence in *Boyz n the Barhood Do America*) and Paradinas's creation just doesn't match up.

That said, some of the tracks do make me want to shake my tush ("I Walk It Like This", "Johnny Hates Jazz"), which made the wonder if Mike actually wants people to dance to this record, or if he's just taking the piss out of the whole process. The timbres and textures may be different than usual, but the tone remains the same.

PETER SHAPIRO

The Orb

Orblivion
 ISLAND 0055 CDLP

From their early days, sharing a roster with anti-pranksters The KLF, The Orb's orbit has led them ever closer to mainstream success. A story which itself charts the shift from experimental ambient to "Ambient", and the rise of their version of Ambient House on the dancefloor. Along the way their music has lost many of its rough edges — a lossiness in the approach to sound collage, illegal dinging on the sample front, and their spacious Steve-Reich-on-cocaine touch. This is their second album for Island and sound engineer Andy Hughes replaces Kris Weston as Ales Paterson's partner.

Paterson once said that "there is a way of making music by putting in the reggae, the

ambient, taking the House, and then taking a few classical ideas and then putting some World Music over the top". However, with increasingly seamless arrangements and a touch of cocky assurance The Orb have always managed to avoid the occasional excesses of many of their followers on the club scene. Having reached a neo-classical plateau of accomplishment their sound journeys are expertly anchored, spongy and bright, rolling like a succession of dayglo globes.

The conceit behind *Orblivion* (we're all heading for ...) is that our modern calendar is out of sync with Christian time and 1997 should really be the year 2000. Thus the opening "Delta HK II" plunges the listener into psychotronic swirls and sinister voices, aware shutting hi-hats with pounding global beats. The Orb still use long sustained monologues instead of vocals, but Rosie Lee Jones's dreamy reminiscences on "Little Ruby Clouds" have been replaced by David Threlk's melismatic rant about berceuses, the mark of the Beast and subconscious satanism (from Mike Leigh's *Haberd*). However, patience seems superfluous in this fluffy, jaunty universe, and the track in question, "SAIL", spins thick spirals of sound with a romping self-assurance before launching into more bombastic dance territory.

There are snatches of drum 'n' bass and weirdness on *Orblivion* ("Mitten Love") runs to the tick-tock of a grandfather clock, but in

keeping with the sense that the world might be ending, the album is generally bosteros and upbeat. "Moribund" is carried along by twofold whistling. "Elegy" lays "sub-a-dum" hummers over thumping beats and skews freewilled vocals. Apocalyptic aeds, these sounds were made for a summer of buyback chug-a-lug prancing on the road to oblivion.

MATT FRYTCH

Jon Rose

Perks
RER 183 CD

Jon Rose/Laboratorio Di Musica & Immagine

Rosenberg's Revised Timetables
BROSHA BSH 004 CD

Jon Rose

Techno Mit Störungen
PLUG BSH NCHT 002 CD

Free experimental comedy or improvisation (or even volkists) divide opinion as sharply as British-born, Australian-grown, Jon Rose. Devices regard his numerous satirical multimedia pieces (commissioned by Australian and European radio) as austere and highly inventive amalgams of spoken text, structured improv and composition, often incorporating a radical use of electronics and audio recording techniques.

Others regard them as overlong and structurally undisciplined, and find his surreal humour risqué. Clearly Rose's levelling eclecticism is an acquired taste, as hyperactive complexity can make listening to an album in its entirety in one sitting a mind-numbing experience.

Rose may be an erratic talent but when he hits the mark he takes you to places other composers wouldn't even dream of. Perks is arguably his finest multimedia piece to date — certainly one where the many facets of his work achieve a really exhilarating coherence. It's based on the life and music of Australian composer and pianist Percy Grainger (1882-1961), best known for his short orchestral pieces and as an avid collector and promoter of folk songs. Rose's useful sleeve notes also remind us that Grainger was a pre-Cage pioneer of aleatory music, an inventor of non-harmonic music machines and an early (pre-Nancarrow) composer of 'unplayable' pieces for piano in his non-musical Mr Grainger was obsessed by bedrums, S&P, racial bigotry and insect fantasies — rich pickings for Rose to weave into a work that stages this lunatic psychodrama as an 'interactive Bedrums Game'. The swath of racket controls tempo, rhythm, panning and volume. Heavily breathing, the ecstatic cries of flagellants, left and right brain quarrels (performed by Eise Lorrain), manic vocal, keyboard and vocal sequences, plus detective improv from

Steve Wishart (hardy-gurdy), Butch Morris (cornet) and perfectly demented vocalising from Phil Minton create an inner world as irresistibly hilarious as it is disturbing. Tonal humour is better paced, less profane, than most other Rose projects. Grainger's themes appear fleetingly, while his 1908 cylinder recordings of folk songs provide a ghostly contrast to Rose's superb hi-tech sound manipulation. A work of extraordinary imagination and originality.

Rosenberg's Revised Timetables is back on more familiar territory with the fabulous Johannes Rosenberg (see Rose's and Rainer Litz's books *The Pink Violin* and *Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping*). The CD is based on a satirical alternative world history (1893-1983) in which so-called 'major' and 'minor' events are jumbled together to refute the idea of history as linear progression, and to cause information overload in the mind of the listener. It doesn't take long. The overlapping of narration (in Italian with English translation) and improv, by Rose and an Italian ensemble, makes this a particularly demanding work which bristles with sudden shifts in dynamics and texture like a John Zorn game-piece. Take your time with it.

Techno Mit Störungen (Techno With Disturbances) sees Rose as project director of an Australian festival assemblage piece constructed from fragments of numerous leading improvisers. The turntables and samplers of Frank Schultz, Chrsian Marciay

and the ubiquitous Osomo Yoshihide produce turgid Techno pulse sequences, where density frequently militates against clarity. These are interspersed with a succession of 'disturbances' by Rose, Phil Minton, Chris Cutler, Peter Cosack, Evan Parker, Sankho Namchiklik, Fred Frith, Jo Sittova, Connie Bauer and others. Not the most imaginative way of using this rich source of empowered material.

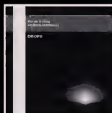
CHRIS BLACKFORD

Luther Thomas

BAGIM'z
CMP 112 CD

Last time Luther Thomas was in London he was playing classic soul baritone behind James Chance. The king of punkjazz lounge nihilism doesn't use just any saxophone player. Luther Thomas emerged in Moscow in the late 60s when he joined the Black Anals Group (the acronym explains the word album title). This was St Louis's answer to Chicago's AACM, a self-help organisation connected to musician-defined music and free jazz. As Joe Bowie's Defunkt attests, BAG players have a strong feel for street-level grooves. In 1981 Luther had his own shot at No Wave funk with a group he called Dozzaz.

This is 'pure' acoustic jazz but Luther's aesthetic differs every note with soul. Much as it offends the categorical mentality, which



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soundcheck

would like acoustic music to be tasteful and timeless, free jazz is as much about bringing the virtues of porch blues and gospel into the public sphere as it is about aspirations to high-art abstraction. The group consists of Luther on alto, Ted Darrall on trumpet, Wilbur Marris on bass and Dennis Charles on drums, everyone plays with the character and weight that is specific to the Afro-American tradition. "Swimming Lake Oliver" sets up an airy groove with the horns chattering at each other, and a hovering sense of expectancy is created by the openness of bass and drums. The solemnity of Albert Ayler is leveraged by Ornette Coleman's playfulness. The way Luther breaks into Daneš's solo is at once supportive and challenging — like coming upon a joke in a dense paragraph by Hegel. "Tag (You're It)" is a game of pass-the-musical-idea. It works better than many continued "concepts" in both improv and classical music because all four players are so buoyant in their musical current. None of the blatz-making cracks of Steve Beresford's ghastly *Fish Of The Water* (for example). "Don't Tell" is finger-popped and folky like a superior Don Cherry tune, "Kool Aid" is beguiling the-bell-of-it with bright fountains of virtuosic tension spraying up between chunks of melody. "As It Were Love" features plangent rhapsody from Luther's alto a tender love encounter unmatched in contemporary jazz.

Art is symbolic politics, a mimicry of social stances and attitudes. By playing acoustic harmonics with a dash of punk humour ("For Don C") or making sophisticated full-throated art out of the fractured music of the socially defeated (the broken blues of "Don't Tell"), the Luther Thomas Quartet recall the way Paul Klee and Max Ernst learned from the art of the insane. The outbursts of political correctness issued from the Lincoln Center by Stanley Crouch — a critical pontif who wants jazz to be the cultural authority of opera — can only see such high-tech enervation with humble acoustic howdowns as perverse and degenerate. To these ears, Luther Thomas's application of cutting-edge musicianship to the pleasures of real-time spontaneity and chance is incredibly moving.

BEN WATSON

UMO Unidentified Musical Object

ROUPE ENTENTELECHY/NOVA SYD HED 13 CD

Prince Charming Psychotropical Heatwave

WORLDWIDE WOOD 13 CD

According to the press release (that revealed nowhere in the commercial packaging) *Unidentified Musical Object* is the first in a series of albums that were designed to create music for a living room in a UFO. What some guy banging on some cans on a New York street corner ("Unidentified Drummer"), or overhearing a Bobby Brown song from the john as someone shits, showers and shaves before going out ("Getting Ready"), has to do with the lounge in an alien spacecraft is beyond me. Conceptual quibbles aside, this project — instigated by the ex-pat German, Khan, and largely propagated by his brother Jemmett Unit (moonlighting from *Re Liquide*) and Akki Dor — does occasionally produce music that is as intriguing as trying to recline on a chaise longue designed for a three foot Martian while drinking your way to Alpha Centauri.

Unsurprisingly, the album works best when it strays from the drab orthodoxies of Electronica and its dull-witted spacecadecades. "UMO One", while superficially the most current of the tracks with its bass drones and ponderous hums, a massive and playful and seems to be the track that most lives up to the album's alleged concept. Meanwhile, the gentle pulse of "Rainbow Room" and the slightly atrophied funk of "UMO Three" bring a strange warmth and intelligence to a genre that normally uses outer space clichés only to show off its jargonaddiction.

Similarly, Prince Charming's *Psychotropical Heatwave* contains mildly inventive music misreading as a concept album. Like Funky Pono's annoyingly smug 1995 album *Head Phone Sex*, *Psychotropical Heatwave* is ludicrously unnecessary a dizzying torrent of baroque wordplay which pictures the Prince as a Casanova for the 90s. "A 30-ton Super B" total wave of savory flavored jazz juice squeezed from the sweetly sick juices of

Prince Charming's smouldering shadowy sordid seduced Surreman subterranean sin city sub-collar of seductive soundscapes. None of the stringing of scandalously suggestive, stream-of-consciousness strands of syllabic sensuality would be a problem if either the album sucked or the music was as sexy as advertised. Unfortunately, neither is true.

Psychotropical Heatwave contains some excellent reworkings of covermaterial, downer clichés — Prince Charming has a way with Bernard Hermann string flourishes, film noir periods and spoken word samples. The result is a moody, edge, titchy strain of DubHoo that might get your head nodding, but won't get your groin gyrating. At least you don't have to go to bed with the guy.

PETER SHAPIRO

Various Artists Hidden Rooms

CERTIFICATE 18 CERT 18CD0001 CDLP

Various Artists Lost In Space Dream 'N'

Lost In Space Dream 'N' Bass Phase 2
LACERBA CD848 2 CDLP

Drum 'n' bass collections tend to conform to one of two types. One is the small label retrospective, bringing together all those 12's that have long since passed into obscurity, the other is the genre overview, an attempt to produce the definitive summation of the ever-mutating musical form. *Hidden Rooms* fits into the first of those frameworks, *Lost In Space* the latter.

Certificate 18, the ipswich-based label, has long been revered by the drum 'n' bass fraternity for the part it played in launching the careers of both Phixxix and Source Direct. Accordingly, it is in their work that occupies two thirds of this collection, recording as Studio Pressure and Sounds Of Life respectively. What's most interesting about these tracks is the relatively linear path they all follow (particularly Phixxix), a long way from the fractal-like complexity of their current work. Tracks such as "A Space Of Jazz" and "Presha 'N'" acquire an added frisson of excitement as you hear in them the first strings of the breathtakingly high-pitched percussive acrobatics

that has become the trademark of such releases as "The Hidden Camera" and "HouseX". Musically, they're always panned pictures of period — a process *Hidden Rooms* endorses in its remaining four tracks, particularly in the screwed-down tension of Kute's relentless minimalist chill creep — but it's only now that they've learnt to use the beats as instruments of dislocation as well. Lost In Space is a much closer affair by contrast, concentrating on the lighter, airier side of drum 'n' bass. Ignore the major player remains by the likes of PPH, Wax Doctor and T-Power, which never venture beyond the personal archetype. Head instead for some of the lesser-known names. Statik Sound System, One True Parker (inspired dark by Ray Keff), Niten Sawney and particularly the Spectra breakout disk of Jimpster. Any attempt to cover such a wide spectrum of sound is bound to leave you in something of a pain-syptic midlounge where comparison between various strands becomes largely irrelevant. But this is a varied enough selection, at least of the more tremulous end of the drum 'n' bass spectrum.

PETER MCINTYRE

Various Artists Mixed

WMC 0038 CD

My trouble with records of electroacoustic music — "serious electroacoustic music" — is that the stuff often sounds better live. The compile opposite to pop and rock music. For many electroacoustic composers, including the very best, the tape is merely the score. The final product, the performance, is in the successful trajectory of the tape, previously over a multi-channel system with good speakers in a big space and presided over by a maestro such as Alisdair MacDonald or Len Denard. And when you add a well-mixed virtuoso player such as James Guthrie, here featured playing the druggily named "three bass recorder" on John Kefauver's jolly *Montal*, the stage is set for a cracking performance. Both kinds of music, as they might have said in *The Blues Brothers* *Electro*. And acoustic.

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So you could view a release like *Mixed* the second in a series of collaborations between the Sonic Arts Network and the NHC label, as a collection of study scores — more interesting if you have been lucky to hear the works in “wide-screen” format, or if you’re already familiar with the composers. As with much classical music, the dynamics and spatial qualities are difficult to capture within the two dimensions of regular stereo recording. Unlike more melodic or rhythmic music, the spatial, textural elements are often what these pieces are all about. Little home hi-fi and personal stereo headphones can’t tell the full story (I’m Recordings have addressed part of this problem by using Poland’s “sound imaging system” on all the releases in the next series.)

Michael Ross Cohen’s *Urbis 62: Posing Moments/Riffs And Rhythms* features talented Dutch carnal/nerd Henk Pienburg and, at 19 minutes, is the longest piece. August Fink’s *Urbis 62: Posing Moments/Riffs And Rhythms* features his own three-part playing and a tape element that really digs in and engages with the streaming. Of the two tape-only tracks, *Urbis 62* is paced by Sarah “Schwarzengager” Collins in a more than a wide range of percussion samples, and *Urbis 62* by Ragnir Fischman has something of the squally *Forbidden Planet* sound about it. Joseph Hyde’s *In Sunlight II: September Song* is for soprano (Steve Halliday), tape and live electronics, involving the aforementioned MacDonald as engineer.

I think you really have to be there — to get your body between the multiple speakers, to let those sculpted sounds wrap around you and fly around across the space around your zoom. At home, this is not a bad album, but not a great one. A bit mixed, really.

JOHN I. WALTERS

Various Artists

Rainfall Levels: In The Hearts Of Everyone Usually

JUSTICE LEAGUE, JCB 5001 CD

Another album of rare Lee Perry material from the label that rescued the rare vintage dub set *Kung Fu Meets The Dragon* last year. The time the focus is on obscure ’70s from the Black Ark era. These are all rasta-themed tunes and only three of them (according to the notes) were ever released in the UK. Vocalists such as Peter and Paul Lewis and Evan Jones are hardly up there with the Junior Murvin of the Perry song stable, either in voice or popularity, but their contributions are worthy enough. All the tracks are presented with the flippin’ dub and mixing there is some fine work, though little of it touches the warmer lingers of the late Perry style. A couple of the tracks were filled out with more radical dub treatments later on. There are strong cuts like *The Bluebell* (“Come Along”) and *Judgement Day* from Dave Higgs (Exile A House’s brother), but what hits the album to the ranks of the essential is one extraordinary

track, “Forward With Jah Orthodox” by Mystic. This was certainly around in the UK in the ’70s but it isn’t common, and to these ears it’s up there with Perry’s finest work. Drenched in the full smoky haze of the later Black Ark, it rides a fantastic groove, the vocal performances glide with the soul of the Impressions and the dub, though doubled, flickers into vivid life towards the end of the piece. The tune’s social-contradict-breaking message — “Forward with Jah orthodox/del get rid of the income tax” — should find favour, too.

WILL HORTON/SONART

Various Artists

The Unfinished

SUB ROSA 58 103 CD

Various Artists

New Rosa Soundscapes

SUB ROSA QUANTUM 153 CD

In a marketplace packed to the gills with compilations, Sub Rosa continue along their own peculiar path with collections built around unorthodox agendas. Not so much concept albums as notion albums, they have continued to up the ante in this area, with an increasingly unique curation and engineering — if bewildering — packaging.

The *Unfinished* adds to the label’s Urban Dances series. If its theme is literally unfinished work then it fills some way short of its aim, the least one can say about any of the music here is that it’s the result of a lot of work. Scott’s Dick Harris contributes “Tap,” it’s unmistakably Harris’s work with a near-instant melody spurt out over a galvanizing techno rhythm which starts perilously close to drum ’n’ bass modernism but somehow steers clear. By contrast, the two pieces by Mark Van Veen (aka Locust) and the three-part live performance by Little seem more concerned with peripheral, perhaps at times too self-consciously serene textures and machine-driven stilled rhythms. We’ve heard this kind of work before, of course, and the words post- and industrial do come to mind (and even that pre-literate I-word, Isolations). But both Little and Locust make this territory with absolute commitment, and it shows.

The odd piece by Dave Toop drops up now and again in this kind of context, and it’s always interesting to compare it with the music it stands alongside. “Borekas” is an outtake from the sessions that produced 1993’s *Screen Ceremonies*. It’s bursts of tremolo-fuzz guitar rip out of a shifting landscape of barely gestured sounds characteristically spread across every meter of the stereo spectrum. In the midst of so much machine music — about machine music struggling with its human attributes — Toop’s has a rare, vital physicality. It’s both a fan and a colleague but whatever it’s worth the price for this alone.

New Rosa Soundscapes features four pieces by Scanner, David Shea and NHC recorded at a Sub Rosa event last autumn at NYC’s

Cooler, interspersed with ambient recordings taken around the city. I have to say Scanner fairly dominates this collection, two of his pieces are featured, and while the semi-“recordings” aren’t his they inevitably recall his work. A reader’s letter in the *Wile* 155 vocal certain reservations about Scanner, a musician whose intelligence keeps him ahead of a considerable proportion of the post-Techno pack, but whose aesthetic is perhaps starting to wear thin. Scanner’s main piece here seems to grasp that notion, and almost entirely eschews scanning in favour of very new NYC Techno. Say what you like about Scanner, he sure knows the meaning of zeitgeist.

Nia’s “Base For The Devil’s Argument” is without question the oddest piece on either of these two CDs, a medieval text sung in soulful overtones over gorgeous, ringing guitar chords. It’s probably unintentional, but the results are high kitch, and very enjoyable for a New Rosa Soundscapes’ biggest disappointment is David Shea’s contribution, which lacks his usual virtuosic jump-outs and genre-compression. It’s possible that the piece was accompanied live with a film, so perhaps one should reserve judgment, but Shea so impressively elsewhere. Overall though, an intriguing and, given NYC’s fruitful embracing of European Electronics, very timely document.

SEPH HOPKINS

Various Artists

Unknown Public 08: Sensuality Essence And Nonsense

UNKNOWN PUBLIC 08 CD/C

Considering the appalling possibility that one or two *Wile* readers may yet be unaware of John L. Walters’ and Laurence Crane’s enigmatic audio-magazine, let it be said that *Unknown Public* (the phrase which Boulez once applied to his audience) represents a singular role in the dissemination of contemporary composition. Since its launch in 1992, *UP* has been consistently championing new writers and blending their work with that of established ones (John Adams is an enthusiastic supporter) and under-represented ones, and it has done so with a verve that makes the whole thing a delight. “Cinéma music in a plain brown box” is how *UP*’s Brad describes the publication, its accompanying magazine is trilingual (English, French, German) and its ideas span further still.

One of the reasons for *Unknown Public*’s success is its ability to go places more formal recordings can’t, offering space not only for “whole” pieces but also excerpts. An open-access point for composers testing under 60 seconds is a regular feature. The 14 tracks of the current issue represent a typically diverse field: some intriguing work from Howard Sierpman (the delicacy of his Cage tribute, *Of Late*, defies description), Mark-Anthony Turnage, what sounds like a Martin

Benny homage from Bob Moses and a wonderfully far-reaching Eric Dolphy transcription of Bale Halsey’s classic “God Bless The Child” rescued with language beauty by Henk Pienburg’s bass clarinet. As with previous editions of *UP*, there’s stuff to take issue with, to ponder and to embrace, wholeheartedly. Two of the most interesting contributors come from Sylvia Hallert (her *Flaming Tongue* for tape and FX has a glass harmonium-like clarity) and Edward McGuire, whose *Romance* for cello and guitar deconstructs the Romantic tradition of virtuoso performance in a subtle and engaging manner. In all, a commendable issue from an infinitely commendable magazine.

LOUISE GRAY

Alan Vega

Dying Prong

213 61 21 33 CD/CD

Two indefinable eras of Alan Vega continue to haunt me. The first is when I witnessed him and his group being bodied on stage by an audience of imposter *Big Man* East Coast fans, one of whom had actually gone to the trouble of smashing a toilet wand in order to hurt a literal solid chunk of vocal glands at the singer. Throughout the ordeal Vega stood his ground, taunting the crowd to do their worst but refusing to abandon his performance.

The second was in his recent New York hotel room where he was explained to me his new song ideas. Vega raged up a set of FX pedals and with a hand held microphone performed a set of songs crunched down on the floor, hitting at the pedals occasionally in his quest for the perfect beat.

That same determination to win through against all odds was also his hunger for experimentation shine through on this latest set of songs, a combination which makes *Dying Prong* Vega’s best solo record since 1981’s *Collison Drive*. To achieve this he has returned to the streets for inspiration, stoking through New York City’s danger zones, looking up trash, eaves dropping on subway slang and memorising the neon signs and signs of spray-painted graffiti that read like lines of alien poetry. To these urban beats Vega adds monochrome machine beats, Les Lerner’s keyboards and Mark Kuch’s guitar. For the first time in ages Vega sounds in control of his own destiny, coming across almost like a demised Mick E Smith, standing on top of the world, offering out such songs as the teasing “Cheerleader” which shows that he has lost none of his ability to come up with an offbeat pop tune. Like all of his best songs this one is deceptively simple and street-smart smelter, backed by a female chorus that makes it sound like some show tune from hell. Phlegm of the end of *Dying Prong* ticks over with mechanical threat and resonates with the pain and passion of previous attempts to get the message through. This time, however, that message suddenly starts to make sense.

KEVIN PITCHCOY

in brief critical beats

Rob Young tries to conquer a backlogged mountain of 12" vinyl

Basilio La Floria/Good Times
OSIRIS 5005 5005 503 12"

Sparky Lighthouse Cats You
Hear Me, Folks/Electricity Hit
Mo 501 501 501 12"

Rome & Cyde, better known for their bumping drum 'n' bass outings on Swm, deliver three slices of feelgood HiPop "La Floria" shows that when it comes to Serge Gainsbourg disciples, the duo — misquoting here as Basilio — know their on-site. Sparky guitar clipped to "the Tamer" sound about behind fleshy beats, all that's missing is Catherine Deneuve circa 1964 on vocals. On "Electricity Hit Me", Alex Mitchell, aka Sparky Lighthouse and a former member of indie pop's Curve, also sounds indebted to the quinquennium of French pop when it briefly came within shouting distance of *musique concrète* in the mid-60s. Over switchback DIY beats, he spins in a variety of corkscrewing Moog sounds, guitars and voice samples. Notable also for a locked run-out groove that actually plays in time.

Designer Vandal/Larson sou.

STATIC SOURCE SOUL, 12 12"
Two to-firm drum-machine manipulations from Tortoise sound engineer Casey Rice "Larson" is the stand-out, where Rice's psychotic twists of the FX controls causes the chugging monochrome beat to explode every now and then like a pack of enraged Doberman

Dillinja Violent/Lemon D

12 01 VALVE VALVE 01 12"
This shined 12" is supposed to herald yet another new era in drum 'n' bass — ever heard that before? No paradigm shifts operative here, but both tracks borrow a rhythmic technique used by Hixson. Agenda to simulate a huge rotating gram-arm, randomly selecting sections of breaks to drop into the flow "Violent" kicks up the low end with a morose kick, but "12 01" lacks of focus or internal logic means it fails to write itself onto the body

Doppler 20:20 Art Electricque

DECEMBER 00000000 00
Drenched in digital FX module obsessiveness, and clothed in a design by Pat Pike (brother of Freeform's Smo), this ought to rights to sit squarely in the Warm Interface/Sheffield Electronics camp. It does, only it's enriched by a germ of dub which seeds itself in tracks like "Bird Spring" and "Pie In Carnation" "Sine

Gentlemen Please" is a transcendent take on Apollo/Sage-style burp-beats, a tactic that's rapidly losing its appeal. But inventive, tactile musical vision make this worth seeking out

Dunderhead Black Shores EP

WORM INTERFACE WORM 12"
Four colorful lumps of squish from the bedrocky-named Nigel Smith-encased in a doggy hand-painted sleeve. "A Floorless Soul" is what this is all about, sonar-bip woom-drum creates a dubbed-out, viscous mood, while "Daddy Dub" is a more traditional reading of 1-8-5 Studio One sounds. A worthy prelude to Smith's first full-length release due later this year. But well Worm Interface have the courage of their convictions and press up a decent number of copies?

Farmers Manual Does Not

Compute TAW TAW 12"
Further evidence of illegal add-ons to Vienna's water supply. These Moog label stalkers have created an utterly undecipherable drum 'n' bass track for new label Tap. an appendage of Ash International, skipping around but never entirely losing the plot. Like all the wonderfully baffling FX output, it manages to be both entertaining and completely pointless

Gescom Keywell SCAM 501 12"

The confusing world of Skam's catalogue — all at turns, backtracks, deletions and resissues — is rapidly becoming a highly collectible one "Keywell" by the Gescom incarnation of Autotech's Sean Booth and Rob Brown, is a crunching, solariform, alt, with few of the mental mazes which characterize their parallel Warp releases of the moment. That's not to say the tracks' four versions attract their attention they reveal a classical, elegiac side to the Autotech duo that's not been in evidence since their Amber LP

Koosmos Koosmos EP PAVSAW 00

PAV 12"
At last this deep space emission — well, it's from Moscow, so might as well — is received up in Western Europe. Made by a pair of Moscow State Engineering students, it's claimed, but even if that's a pack of lies, it's exactly what the sounds like. Four tracks of zero-gravity bliss make this Sakin's best of some considerable time, some beautiful real-time Rhodes and quivering star-bright theremin sparkle

between the pure electronic pulsations, crisscrossing the life-giving warmth of the stellar Sputnik sound

Lexis Criminal Elements/

Hypnotize CERNICAT 18 00018 12"
There's been something too nice about the bulk of Cern 18's output — Kula and Studio Pressure honourably excepted — to properly satisfy. Yet this offering, from Rob Solomon, an Israeli-born cousin of Probe's Rupert Parkes, deserves to be mentioned in despatches. "Criminal Elements" builds on an indelible orchestral climax as its hook-sample, and races for home with the aid of some teetering Latin-style triangle percussion. Bang this one to rights

µ-Ziq Urmur Bile Traxx HAT PLODS

02012"
When the best sampled strains of Ornette Coleman's "Virgin Beauty" arrive in the early moments of "Urmur Bile", its extraordinary build guitar line lapping like a lazy manta ray, only to disappear as Mike Paradinas scrawls some trademark jittering Electro beats across the surface, it's tempting to think something's seriously amiss. But gradually, as the two elements are reconciled over the ensuing nine minutes, "Urmur Bile" reveals itself as Paradinas's most sophisticated work to date. "Let Us" is a hysterical jungle in both senses. "MS Sazobon" continues the interest in traffic noise which surfaced last year in his collaboration to New York's Art In The Anchorage event. And with radical reworkings of older µ-Ziq tracks including "The Phone Sock" (aka "The Sonic Fox") and the headlining headrush that is "Hornet", there's no reason to hesitate

Panacea 1 2 000000 00 12"

If you thought Jungle didn't get any drier than No U Tum, Wurtzburg's Matthias Mootz just blew out the candles I know what Techstep drum 'n' bass is: the 90s equivalent of adolescent Death Metal. Look at the facts: tube-screamer riff, obsessions with fantasy imagery, nihilistic body horror, any repetition of repeated musical gestures, infinitely spiraling sugarcane. The wilfully unlikely chord-sides just happen to be triggered from a sampler, rather than summoned on a pointy lead-back guitar. That said, "Terror's silent screams," "Torture's teeth-grinding rampage" and "Stomping" are sub-bass sublimation sure will alter your heart-rate

PIN Label EP FREEDOM NAVIGATOR 00

00 12"
Just when you thought Tim Wright, aka Germ, had gone under, he reappears with a new alias and a track on Micro Dub Injection 2 "Lobe" drops up again as the lead track on the EP, an understated, funeral affair compared with Germ's Porrot album, which featured blazingly

risky trombone from Jeff Hery. Still, the title track's wussy 303 intersections and "Alive And Seemingly" cymbals' embrace will chase away this month's surfeit of 'loopy vinyl. Although these recordings are over a year old, the tentative but swinging timbrestriching on the breakfast track, "I Remember", and the card-shuffling snare-rolls on "Paradise", what the palate for new Germ-related projects upcoming in 97

Porter Ricks Redundance 1 &

2 ABSOLUTE FM 1510 12" **Porter Ricks** Zebru BARON BARON 10 501 501 sides of vinyl across which Thomas Riker applies his samity patience to pulse-driven Techno forms. After the icy endurance tests of such Ambient albums as Nutsch Ganspur and Atemlos, perhaps it was inevitable that Riker would step back (or push forward) into an approach that assimilates rhythm, however minimal. Like Sakin's releases, Porter Ricks tends to give pleasure or drive to distraction. But with the two discs of "Redundance", Riker shows himself an adept at manipulating the information between the marching 4/4 kicks. His monkey-pounce rhythms, constructed with subsonic squeals and strangely attracted bleeps, are creating all the right vibrations

Rob & Goldie The

Shadow/Dom & Rob Distorted DREAMTOWN SHADOW SHADOW 100 2012"
"Devil waits in shadows," murmurs Goldie while riding deep within the grooves of this two-disc of a ton of releases from Moving Shadow. Well, these days the pinnac of darkness infests perhaps one in every three or four discs that come flying out of their Soho offices, but this is a fitting centenary marker. No need for the sophists' sales that sink around some of the label's jazzier grooves, just headlining parades and spitting bass from Goldie, and a sound from Dom Argon that's spat from the mouth of a helcat. Apart from the yucky 'gold' vinyl, there's little sitting on laurels thanks to overseas Rob Playford up, bustle and out in the strategy

Shantel Auto Jumps & Remixes

DECEMBER 000000 00
From the behind cover photo and the name, I had Shantel down as a woman, but apparently it's a bloke. Whatever, these ten tracks live and four remixed from a previous project refashion genre synth waves into something refreshingly funk and freeflowing, with the aid of such tactics as superhumanic Miles Ahead-style chord voicings (on "Rebels Without A Cause") and a surrealist, but sweet-sounding female MC purring over the top at intervals. A nod-out collection that never lets you dare off □

in brief outer limits

Paul Stump offloads another shipment of Industrial waste

Christopher De Laurenti

Three Canals For Orchestra
AMERICAN ARCHIVE RECORDINGS AAR 003 CD
The *Memories* for this curiosity consist of a self-advertisement of admirable chutzpah, Pseudo's Corner syntax and not a little self-righteousness. DIY genius and Harry Patch acolyte De Laurenti assaults an unsympathetic world with his music. And beyond the *Memories* look-a-like-of-the-world posturing, this prolific collage is brave, fearless and utterly convincing. It's breathtaking in scope and energy but at times over-eggs the pudding by cramming in one extra attack or decay or one extra sample from a prodigious collection. But that doesn't mean the bewitched sequence of called out tracks that's "Three Canals" — sounding roughly like an entire record shop processed through a cement mixer — is anything but very very good indeed. OK, but we hear you, we like you. Now follow us up.

Magma Concert 1976 Opera De Rerums seventeen & 30

I sense that Christian Vander will not be satisfied until every note ever recorded by him and his cosmic crew is committed to CD. There's a missionary zeal about the size and scope of his release schedule, not to mention a cult dimension that recalls the mystique surrounding one of his heroes, Sun Ra. The title-set was recorded a year or so after the classic double LP *Magma Live* and boasts a similar line-up (keyboardist Jean-Paul Asseline is replaced by Patrick Gauthier), but it's a leaner and darker piece of work, almost introspective in places, with less of the ecstatic Prog grandstanding that was so many hearts. *De Futura*, the 25-minute jam which grinds its way through the first half of the first disc, is minimal indeed for Magma, yet it's dark and beatfully menacing in a way that Pink Floyd could never even imagine. This is one bad-mood group. Perhaps the presence of Gauthier, co-head of Heildon, that most gmm-focussed of all Euro noise bands of the 70s, has something to do with it. There are inevitable binges — the descent into drum solo on the freeform "Scris Et Chorus De Batterie" — and the remaining pieces, all 30 minutes plus, can lose their way if any one group member gets ideas above their station. But for the most part it's a memorable outing, perhaps with the passing of the years Vander's once-foregrounded cosmic slop has withered away and allowed the music to stand on its own.

Muslinggauze Fatsh Guerrilla

STIMULANT MUSLINGGAUZE 009 3CD
The minimal and brooding dissolution of Muslinggauze's last limited edition release (*Return Of Black September*) is here spread over three discs in a run of 700 copies. Getting down to fundamentals in more ways than one, this severely ascetic, sonic polemic renders the guttural, dubby soundstage of its predecessors even more unflinching, with shrilling blasts of ghostly percussion and bass-booms that sound like distant artillery. Good enough, but 173 minutes of non-stop anything can get to be a bit wearying. Who's in the edit suite?

Namlook/Schulze/Laswell

Dark Side Of The Moog Vol 5 FAX PC 00121 CD
Split into eight parts and running for the usual 50 minutes, but only half-way interesting, I'm afraid. Minimalism is all very well, but even the uneventful can be good or bad. Here three musicians who should know, and can do, better simply adopt their way through the fifth release in a series that should never have got past volume two. Even the best bits — the desultory mellotron wasteland of part three and the zombie dub of part five — are more evocative for their nostalgia value than for anything innovative. "Dedicated to Bob Moog without whom this album would not be possible," reads the sleeve note. Why pass the buck?

Genesis P Orridge & White

Stains At Stockholm newcassette ewcom CD
Without some really rather good cemetery beats and ESI shards of guitar and sampled raw, the mood-music presentation of Orridge's questionable poetry and gnostic manifestos, read in a deepened murmur by Gan himself, would be one of the most preposterous packages this side of David Sylvian. Yet like the former Japan vocalist (whose recent work seems to be sliding remarkably close to Orridge's own preoccupations) the *psychic* one has always had an assured hand on his musical sensibilities, making packaging and textual matters secondary to an unflinchingly compelling sonic music.

Adham Shaikh/Tim Floyd

DAFT INSTINCT AMB 6006-2 CD
Some of the silkiest *Imnotives* ever written, describing the album as a "sawwave of existence" and gleeting on about nose pollution in the Pacific Northwest, prepares

the listener for the most meniscuous New Age drivelling imaginable. These guys make Deep Forest seem lush. A shame, because while there's little new here, there is an appealing but unsettling fit in the guitar-dominated drifts. Unlike all New Age productions this is never comfortable music, there's a sense that these two musicians aren't so much communing with nature as looking over their shoulders for grizzlies or sasquatches.

Test Department 'Totality 2

Geometric Rhythms KX 119-02 CD
In *The Wire* 1431 I wrote that "Genius" (a track from Test Department's last album, *Totality*) was "seven league-booted Hellbox, one of the most danceable tracks of the year". These four remotes are a nice verification of that opinion. With the exception of the Techno/Traffic emulation of "Fortified Genius" (by Symphony Nervous) the breadth and evenness of the new Test Department's soundstage is not upfront but winningly rearranged. Even an over-zealous jungle remix by OJP and Steven Teat retains some of the original's textural excellence. "Genius No 7 (Magic Number)" and "Ingenious" are the better here. Ideal introduction to a group that's going higher and higher.

Vance Orchestra

Moods/Immortal Moments newcassette ewcom CD
Those wacky Dutch — so good at *Jeux Sans Frontières*, remember — they're a gas. You were expecting Mike Flowers and all you get is racket. Apart from the ironic trifling this is a run-of-the-mill piece of soundsculpting and electroacoustic Ambient. However, it's oddly interestingly organic in its choice of textures — there are, it seems, snakes and lizards at work in these editorial tracks, and "Innocent Metal" seems to be a whirling web of its own.

Various Artists Nocturne

Concrete Unit CIRCUS RECORDS BUC 021 CD
Just when you thought the world was already full up with drones, another skislap from the great Industrial plant is dumped on the turntable. What's really depressing is that much of this lot is just what people imagine Industrial to be: dull, grey musical saws. Even the title could be a parody of the genre. Some light penetrates, but it's mostly the colour of smeared lipstick, with schizophrenia sub-#1. Hear songs from the likes of Vassily and Fear Of Dots (although *The Rotary Fields*). "Red Sea" is a thoughtful enough addendum. Nothing here is what you might call remotely bad, but neither is it all that interesting; the Americans can seem to help Stephenson's personnel of every genre they get their hands on. If this is the New World's New Music, take me back in time. □

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freefall

Clive Bell plunges through music's protecting veil and enters the realms of sonic absurdity. This month: a new star of gonzo music journalism

Wherever way you look at it 1996 was a great year for British music. "Sir" Simon Rattle shouting and waving his arms about on TV, lovable woolly-hatted Gungo Bates collecting that prize for European jazz, erm, somewhere in Denmark, and Jarvis Cocker awarding the Turner Prize and waving his arm about on TV. So it's good to salute yet another fine British achievement — the award of the Bon Mot European Prize for Outstanding Music Journalism to our very own Boz Crapley.

The Bon Mot is a relatively new award, jointly sponsored by the Deutsche Bundesbank, Embassy Cigarettes and the Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce. This is the first time a British journal has won the award, and Boz was quick to dismiss suggestions that the Europe-wide panel of judges might not have understood what he wrote. "Music journalism is an international language, actually," quoth Boz, "and anyhow, who really understands what anyone is saying these days? My subtext is like a bassline in a club toilet, it's gonna kick you in the chest whether you're listening or not."

So here's an example of Boz Crapley at his uncompromising best, an album review that we reprint by kind permission of *Lorge* magazine.

"This is not just another album by Beggars. Beggars doesn't 'make albums' any more OK, it looks like an album, it's in a CD box, and it's called *Gnome* by Beggars. Don't let that fool you. This is not just a CD as a pleading hymn of a punch, straight to the bloated solar plexus of the consumerist beast inside all of us, and the beast is left heaving and spluttering in the gutter, wondering if he's ever going to breathe

again. It's Beggars vs The Beast, on your street, right, and all you can do is creep away indoors and twitch the lace curtains of your pathetic bourgeois lifestyle and wine. 'But it's an album, isn't it?' Give me a break.

Beggars isn't just in tune with the zeitgeist, he's eaten the zeitgeist for breakfast and on this album we can hear him picking it out of his teeth. *Gnome* is so 'now', it's so 'us' that we already know all the words, all the tunes. You don't need this record, it's already inside you, it's already played you so many times it's worn down your grooves and you need replacing. If you can't hear *Gnome* right now, in your head, all the time, then I mean you're so hopelessly out of touch that I can't believe you're reading this review. I'm sure you're so out that you just came back in again, you know?

Back in the era when Beggars still 'made music' and 'released albums' he played guitar, a bit like Buddy Holly. Then one crucial evening in the theatre, while watching a musical based on Buddy Holly's life, Beggars was poleaxed by a vision so powerful he calls it his "out-of-Buddy experience". With his next album Beggars took the critics' ears and quite literally nailed them to the floor. Swollen Bobs was the record that really put the pus into push chairs.

Whipping up critical furore like the froth on a café macchiato, like the sputum on a blocked canal full of detergent, like the... er, anyway, Beggars's next project, *Love Power*, involved setting a baroque opera by Jean-Baptiste Lully (*La Poussee De L'Amour*) to an Acid House rhythm track. Not so much 'setting' the opera, more like showing a stomach-pump into Lully's rotting entrails and pulling very hard.

When it comes to *fin de siècle* angst Beggars doesn't just put his finger on the spot, he picks off the scab and squeezes. Hard. Like a Frank Zappa CD box set stuffed into a back pocket, Beggars just doesn't fit in — his music nips apart the faded denim of the defunct counterculture, exposing the knees and legs underneath.

Don't expect to see *Gnome* in the charts — Beggars doesn't want you to 'buy' this record. He wants you to confront it, to measure yourself against it, to realise how pitifully inadequate your musical responses are compared to Beggars and the tiny handful of people who really understand him. And if only one single person feels inadequate, then maybe this review will have been worthwhile? □

Label distributors & contacts

Further consumer info labels not named in this column should be available from good specialist retailers such as Depth Charge, Piccadilly, Rough Trade, These, etc. In emergencies, contact lively distributors such as Cargo, Greyhound, Harmonia Mundi, Impetus, Kudos, Penance. Recommended: RTM, SRD, These, Vital, etc.

2:13:61 through Pinnacle
4AD through RTM/OISC
Absolut through SRD
American Archive Recordings PO Box 45655, Seattle, WA 98145, USA
Arka through Vital
Atavistik through SRD
Baron through SAM/Vital
Beggars Banquet through RTM/OISC
Bomb HipHop through Greyhound, Soul Trader
Certificate 18 through Vital
Chrome through SRD
CIMP through Impetus
City Slang through RTM/OISC
Dame Ambiances Magnétiques, CP 263 338, East Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2T 3A7
December Dawn through DDR

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print run

Brian Duguid flicks through a shelf-load of new music 'zines



Audion #36 (ULTRA THULE 1 CONDUIT STREET, LIVERPOOL L2 2J5)

A mildly schizophrenic magazine, published out of Leicester's Ultra Thule record shop by brothers Alan and Steven Freeman, which covers all sorts of avant-garde composition and popular music, but which is at its best with Progressive rock and "cosmic" electronic music of the Kraut variety. Even there, they're better at offering outcries to blues than at tearing out-right criticism because also their recent *Croak in The Cosmic Egg* survey of Kosmische Musik). In other areas, particularly noise-based and jazz-related music, their critical ability vanishes entirely. The latest issue features Emrys, Santa Marmas Maria, Peter Frohnader and others. It remains an indispensable document for dedicated Krautrock explorers prepared to live with its idiosyncrasies.

Fourth Door Review #1 (PO BOX 2632 LINES, SUSSEX BN1 7JG)

Fourth Door Review stands out among all the 'zines reviewed here, both for its unusually high production quality and for its regularity of vision. Editor Oliver Lovenstein envisions a forum for the exploration of issues of technological change, particularly as these relate to the ecological and social environment. Much of the cultural focus is on music, with lengthy, in-depth interviews with Helger Czukay, Talisha Mackenzie and Mouth Music opening this issue, but these treat music as a focal lens on more general cultural developments, rather than as the central issue. It's unfortunate that this price is so high, since this is one of the most provocative and considered magazines available on the UK small press scene.

Grand Royal #3 (PO BOX 26693, LOS ANGELES, CA 90006, USA) Nominally a glossy vanity mag published by The Beazle Boys and a few pals, Grand Royal retains all the pungent lefts you'd normally expect glossed-out to edit out. At first sight, a lengthy wallow in analogue synthesiser nostalgia is the main attraction (featuring Bob Moog, Wendy Carlos, Dick Hyman, Stereolab and many others). Eventually though, it's the slice-of-life material that appeals more. Special lucids for a report from Bob Moog infiltrating a golf tournament while impersonating Beazle Prince D, and a truly enlightening visit to the New England Synthesizer Museum, but there's plenty of logy-dad low-life hi-jinx to amuse.

Octopus #5 (147 RUE DES TROIS BORNES 75011 PARIS, FRANCE, 25 FF) The cover lines make this French-language 'zine look like a minor image of The Wire: *Octopus* Quartet, Squarespinner, Jim D'Onofrio, Jan Garbarek, Jorge Reyes, Mani, Wagon Christ, Bary Adamson, Metahroads, etc. Complex but reasonably accessible monochrome layouts house long Q&A interviews with most of the above as with many 'zines, the critical input seems to be kept to a bare minimum, letting musicians speak their piece unmolested. But there is a fairly open-ended and up-to-date review section, a background feature on the Beats and even a Bookthread primer (!).

Organised Sound #1 (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, THE CONSUMERS BUILDING, SHARPSHURRY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE CB2 3RQ, UK)

Noisegate #4 (130 SCOTT ROAD, PITTSFORD, SHEPHERD 54 TEL 52 50) Organised Sound, a recent addition to the ranks of academic computer music journals, represents a gradual shift in opinion among the electroacoustic music community. The editorial acknowledges that avant-garde developments in computer music are increasingly irrelevant given the ways in which popular music now exploits the same technology. Unfortunately, the journal itself does little to bridge the gap. The first article, a history of sampling by Hugh Davies, gives the game away, failing utterly to acknowledge both the ubiquity and diversity of pop sampling activity, as well as the intellectual issues raised by the more provocative sampling avant-gardists such as John Oswald.

Despite being a 'mere' fanzine, Noisegate has a better handle on developments. If its critical vocabulary is sometimes a little limited, it's at least open-minded, with an interest in wider cultural issues related to sound and

noise as well as just music. This also leads to an interest in 'sound art' installations, etc., which is rare in a music magazine, with the two communities usually having little contact. The latest issue deals with audience noise, solar radio emissions, digital recording frequencies (slightly misleading, this one), spatial perception of music, how to release a DIY record and plenty more.

Revue Et Corrigée #29 (PO BOX 267 25 RUE DOCTEUR BOUOIR 38100 GRENOBLE, FRANCE, 20 FF) A long-running and always intelligent survey (in French, of course) of all forms of avant-garde music, with a commitment to publishing artists whose exemplary pedigrees aren't always matched with fame and fortune. For this issue that includes ultra-minimalist Etienne Radigue and Bernhard Gunter, as well as post-industrial noisecore Achim Wollschlaeger and composer Janis Dumitrescu. Their reviews demonstrate interest in a wide variety of contemporary approaches to experimentation too.

Rubberneck #23 (21 DEWITT DRIVE, BAKINGSTONE, HAMPSHIRE RG22 6B LINE SEND LARGE 30P P&H 3 INTERNATIONAL REPLY COUPONS OVERSEAS) Funded by advertising, Rubberneck is a long-running and entirely admirable document of free improvisation, avant-garde composition, Progressive rock, and related musics edited by Wire contributor Chris Blackford. This issue features Bill Bruford, Joe Manon, Max Eastley and David Jackson (of Van Der Graaf), but it's the well-informed and increasingly broadminded review section that makes it an essential document.



The Sound Projector #1 (134 PRINCE ROAD, CAMBERLEY, LONDON SE25 8W)

I get the impression that editor Ed Present is something of a latecomer to many of the musical areas featured in his magazine. There's plenty of the gushy enthusiasm of the recent convert, as well as a great deal of speculation to annoy the well-informed

rapidly. Fortunately, it's this occasional naivety that makes the magazine so refreshing. Ed and his collaborators have things to say about the music which simply wouldn't occur to a reader ever. The coverage is mostly in an avant-rock vein — Faust, Keiji Haino, Stereolab, Anton Dool, Joe Meek, Boredoms — with relevant zades in avant-garde composition — Tony Conrad, Harry Partch, La Monte Young — and occasional forays elsewhere, such as into folk music, but we could have done without the po-faced dismissal of all club culture-related musical initiatives.

The Space Age Bachelor #1

(1039 VANDERBYL ST, NW, CALGARY, AB T2B 3K3, CANADA, \$4) A fanzine in the classic vein, which is to say filled with confused layout and bursting with ideas, not all of them well-considered. Despite the title, neo-Bay Listening is only part of the agenda (Interviews cover Stereolab, Pulp, Pylon, and Tortoise). If a dialogue with puno Simon Reynolds is perhaps a little too precious, the 'zine's correspondence is rambling, indulgent dissection of the messianic cosmography of Tricky and Michael Jackson, which bewilders as much as it enlightens.

Tuba Frenzy #3 (PO BOX 576, OVAPE, HILL, NC 27514, USA) American fanzines often seem to bridge the gap between college rock and avant-post-rock with uneasy self-consciousness, never quite sure where to pitch the intellectual level. With *Your Pitch* seemingly giving up the quest for a way out of lowest-common-denominator tedious, Tuba Frenzy remains the main forum for all things post-rock. Interests range between free jazz and post-classical via most of crimp-rockers: the latest issue features interviews with William Parker, Crawling With Tansies and Wright Sloat. As with all the fanzines, the best elements are the most obsessive, with the lengthy, unedited Trans Am interview the only highlight here.

Yakuza #8 (PO BOX 26293, WILMINGTON DE 19899-6019, USA) "Inspired by punk rock and travel". Yakuza is only imprecisely a music magazine, although in every other way it's typical of an American fanzine: highly personal while still stick enough to pull in the advertisers. The obvious staple, a punk band tour diary, is present, but contents are otherwise unpredictable and diverse. Lee Rankin chaps in with an account of his visit to Japanku in Morocco (a version of which appeared in the Wire 158), there's an anecdote about bizarre neighbours, the dog that wouldn't die, low-life fiction and a new reviewer's manifesto for alternative medicine. Fie under vermacular epiphany. ☹ Prices, where shown, relate to the country of origin. For further information send an SAE or a couple of international Reply Coupons to the relevant address.

**multi
media**

Rahma Khazam meets **Jacques Rémus**, hyperinstrument builder



As technology propels electronic music into new sonic dimensions it is also opening up vast possibilities in the design of musical instruments. A bunch of movers are operating on the fringes of performance art, sound sculpture and computer technology are exploring these new avenues as they breathe musical life into the most unlikely inventors. North America and Holland have their share of these mad inventors, while in France Jacques Remy is one of the leading exponents of a new kind of growth that is driven by a niche for musical instruments removed from the concert hall and club setting. Remy, an about 50 year old who has nothing of the obsessive scientist about him, recently exhibited two of his machines at, of all places, a technical exhibition located in Paris's business quarter. "My installations combine music and sculpture," he says, "and I have performed with them in all kinds of places, from contemporary music festivals to theatres, art galleries and even a science

The exhibition space echoed with the eerie sound of his computerized chimes, which were playing compositions by Ligeti and Rêmus himself. Suspended in the air as to evoke a bird in flight, this modular sound sculpture (it can be adapted to any spatial or acoustic environment) consists of 25 turned metal tubes. Solenoids strike the tubes producing notes which are enhanced by some specular lighting effects. Equally striking was Rêmus's musical video camera, a sophisticated motion-analysis system that uses electronic interfaces developed in Canada and France to translate video images into MIDI data. Visitors to the exhibition stood beneath the video camera and, alternately,

embarrassed, excited or carried away, executed hand movements that triggered rattling hiaps or thundering percussion. "The music camera calls for new gestures that don't need years of practice like the flute or the saxophone do," explains Rémus. "The aim is to create a new rapport between the performer and his instrument. With traditional instruments the musician's physical involvement is an essential part of the music he creates but with electronic interfaces this is no longer the case."

As in the case of other audio artists, Remus's song cautions have yet to make a large-scale impact on audiences, but he has several projects going that look set to change this state of affairs: he is developing a CD-ROM that will serve as an introduction to audio art and enable the user to design their own music; he is organising a live music concert on the Internet that will be performed by a group of machines located in several different countries. Needless to say, Remus appears to thrive on such seemingly far-fetched ideas. In true mad scientist mode, he is also working on what is probably his most dangerous project to date, an ensemble of 'electronic organisms' that will be subjected to enormous differences in temperature, enabling them to produce long loud sounds that are even more powerful than those produced by organ pipes. As he explains: 'We're talking about temperatures of 1000 degrees. I'm currently looking for

Rimkus has been applying technological discoveries to music for the past 15 years, a position that he developed late in his chequered career. He trained as a biologist but early on opted for music instead, studying with such luminaries as Pierre Schoeffel. Yet by the end of the 1970s he had developed a dislike for the austere world of electroacoustic music. "I was interested in their approach to writing music, and in the fact that the music they composed wasn't intended for musicians (but for machines), but concerts of electroacoustic music were dull affairs and the audiences seemed to consist increasingly of

Remus had by this time joined the avant garde saxophone ensemble Urban Sax, consisting of 20 or so musically costumed musicians who would perform

GO TO: https://www.fda.gov/FTM/ftmdevices/ftmdevices_data/ftmdevices.html#med

Unlike the majority of the Indian film industry's output, there's nothing flash about Sam Mohammad's Urdu/Hindi Film Music site, which is loaded with pictures, information and lyrics relating to Bollywood film music. But its content-over-presentation approach makes it a hugely rewarding information centre which contains interviews and articles on great composers and musicians such as RD Burman, Salil Chaudhry, Khayyam, AR Rahman, C Ramachandra, Lata Mangeshkar or P. Diddy. The articles are replete from the newsgroup rec.music.india.music: (RMI), a group in which arguments and controversies flare up over such touchy subjects as, "Who has recorded more songs - Lata Mangeshkar or Asha Bhosle?"

record over 25,000 songs, as listed in the Guinness Book of Records, are supplied here.) A good list of links will send you to *AMIT* itself, other lyrical film pages, or companies offering software that will transcribe lyrics from a multitude of Eastern languages. The one real complaint is the scarcity of pictures — a decent image of each personality mentioned would be handy for the uninitiated. So, if you want to know what a ghazal is, exactly, or read transcriptions of thousands of Hindi song lyrics, this site is the place to browse around, with plentiful wisdoms to be found with every click. How about this, "Such is the nature of music that its creation must be tough but its sharing imperative!"

Copyright leavers take note

DONG YOUNG

simultaneously in different outdoor locations, synchronising their music by means of transceivers built by Romeu. "The idea of organizing music in space has always appealed to me," he says.

It was a prolonged sojourn in the United States that inspired him to start building musical machines. "I discovered people there who played very differently to European musicians, people like Harry Partch, Conlon Nancarrow, and even The Residents. I didn't actually know The Residents because nobody did [they wanted to remain anonymous] but I loved their music, and that changed."

On returning to Europe he started building the instruments that were to become his stock-in-trade, one of his most popular inventions to date being the Concertomatique. The crankshafts, gestic and brightly coloured tubing of these outdoor string, wind and percussion units are as striking as their robotic precision. "I've always been fascinated by machines," the *Charlie Chaplin* film *Modern*

Times made a deep impression on me and I spent a whole year devouring American science fiction novels."

But Rehmus is also concerned with the performance aspect: "The audience's reaction is capital. It gives me ideas and inspires me to keep going."

Like many musicians who are enamoured of technology, Rémus's talent for innovation manifests itself in his machines rather than in his music. As he himself admits ("The music I compose isn't middle-of-the-road by any means, but then it isn't exactly intellectually challenging either. But that's the way I like it." Perhaps it is up to other composers to create new music that will fully exploit the seemingly vast potential of these weird and wonderful machines.)



new notes at a glance

information from SPNM

february

* 1-2 Composers Live!

Hind, Turner, Sheen, Boyle, Graig*** Talbot*** Stravinsky, Spear*** Finnissy, Britwistle, Burrell
West Road Concert Hall,
Cambridge. 8/5 Cashback, 8/5
01223 357851

1 Palestrina Pfinzer ROH

2 Sounds Positive

Sutton-Anderson,
Hendel, Ireland, Desorgher,
Carpenter, Bainbridge,
Arnold*** Anderson
Victoria Drawing Room, Avenue
House, East End Rd, London N3
0181 455 4175

Joanna MacGregor Messiaen BH

3 Sinfonia 21

Anderson, Anderssen,
Samuel, Strauss
JSS

4 YCAT Wigmore Lunchtime Series 5

Gaurtneux, Keiko, Xenakis,
Chausson, Fauré, Strauss,
Head
WFH

Peter O'Hagen, piano
Stockhausen, Ligeti, Boulez,
Bartók
PR RFH3

5 BBC Symphony Orchestra Stravinsky, Nielsen, Burrell*** RFH1

CBSO
Erke-Sven Türl,
Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich
Symphony Hall, Broad St,
Birmingham B3 0121 212 3333

Composer Conducts II:
Heinz Holliger
Mozart, Holliger***, Huber***
QEH RFH2

Sinfonia 21
Anderson, Anderssen,
Samuel, Strauss
Cora Exchange, Cambridge
01223 357851

6 Sinfonia 21
Britten, Anderson,
Anderssen, Samuel, Strauss
Great Hall, Lancaster University
01524 593729

Palestrina Pfinzer ROH

7 Apartment House
Hein, Clarke, Barrett,
Hespos, Lachenmann,
Finnissy
Great Hall, University of Reading,
Reading RG1 0181 892 4201

Sinfonia 21
Britten, Anderson,
Anderssen, Samuel, Strauss
Elton Memorial Church, Dunelm
0191 374 3210

9 Sinfonia 21
Britten, Anderson,
Anderssen, Samuel, Strauss
Turner Sims Concert Hall,
Southampton 01703 595151

Music Past & Present
Stoklos, Mozart, Schumann,
Berlioz*** Williams
Jockers Lane Theatre 260a
Arbury Rd, London N6
0181 341 4421

10 The Raphael
Ensemble
Dvorak, Beethoven,
McCabe***
Lynn Maw Club, St George's
Theatre, Grand Library, Lark
01582 21628

Composer's Choice
Spring Series -
Eudymon Ensemble
Casken, Takemitsu, Ligeti,
Armstrong*** Debussy
PR RFH3

Palestrina
Pfinzer
ROH

11 Sinfonia 21
Anderson,
Anderssen, Samuel, Strauss
Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton
01273 665861

London Choral Society
Blackford*** Fauré
RFH1

13 Olge Belekets, piano

Liszt, Chopin, Debussy,
Scriabin, Beethoven,
Frisova, Schumann
JSS

* 15 The State of the Nation

Ades, Anderson, Hughes,
Knight, Melniczuk, Powell,
Attwood*** MacRae***
Horne*** Johnson*** Lunn***,
Czapliar***, Sauer*** etc.
QEH RFH2

Andrew Spiering and
Sarah Walker
Milhaud, Jack*** Pym,
Galaby, Crane, Finnissy,
Boven

Recent Notes, Blackheath Concert
Halls, London SE3
0181 463 0100

Suns Dance
Nash*** Mass, Musgrave,
Matthews
Ashon Road Hall, Paradise Mass
Birmingham B3 0121 236 5632

Palestrina
Pfinzer
ROH

* 16 The State of
the Nation
Culler, Bethany, Hayden***
Bates*** etc.
QEH RFH2

Rites of Spring
Stravinsky
RFH1

17 Andrew Ball,
piano
Liszt, Wood*** Chopin, Ives
WFH

19 Clocks and
Clouds
Ligeti*** Ravel, Bartók
QEH RFH2

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Limbick, Bryans, Smith***
Fox, Smith, Pierce***
Michael Tippett Centre, Newton
Park, Bath 01225 463362

Palestrina
Pfinzer
ROH

20 LSO Debussy JW

21 London
Sinfonietta
Verlase, Stravinsky, Boulez***
QEH RFH2

Apartment House
Rackham, Gudmundson-
Holmgren, Crane, Finnissy,
Huber, Eisler
Century Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 0181 892 4201

22 [rout]
Stockhausen, Cage,
Baker*** Hayden*** Cardew,
Newland*** Armstrong***,
Anderssen***, Sauer*** etc.
Bocawingfield, Newport Street,
Vauxhall, London SE1
0171 582 6465

Brunel Ensemble
Matthews, Woolrich, Ades,
Sandheim
St George's, Brandon Hall, Bristol
0122 503676

SoundWaves 97: Holst
Singers
Górecki, Palestrina, Nyström,
Taverner, Pärt, Schönberg
Sally Bessy Theatre, Grand
Parade, Brighton 01273 799709

Clocks and Clouds
Machaut, Grinnaz,
Tenorista, Solego, Ligeti
QEH RFH2

23 LSO Debussy BH

24-28 Sounds
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Britwistle, Patterson, etc.
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JSS

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Parker
Phoenix Theatre, North Road,
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26 Homage to
Takemitsu
Takemitsu, Bach, Britanna
JSS

Passage -
A Song Cycle
Paruthi*** Bekazz***
Gardner*** Wallen***
Byrhomong*** Paintal***
QEH RFH2

27 LSO
Debussy
BH

Towards the
Millennium - The 60s
Stravinsky, Henze
Symphony Hall, Broad Street,
Birmingham B3
0121 212 3333

28 The Continuum
Ensemble
Matthews, Ives, Crawford
Seeger, Riley, Crail, Fox
Hulse Street Church, Thayer
Street, London W1
01895 233490

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** UK Première
* London
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JSS St John's, South
Square, London SW1
0171 222 1061
RFH1, QEH RFH2,
PR RFH3

Royal Festival Hall,
London SE1
0171 960 4262
ROH Royal Opera
House, Covent
Garden, London WC2
0171 304 4000
WFH Wigmore Hall,
36 Wigmore Street,
London W1
0171 935 2141

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WIRE

david toop

lets The Singing Dogs off the leash

A doggy theme has been barking in the background through the turn of the year. I don't quite know how to explain it. Maybe the canine thing began in Amsterdam. Late one cold night in December, Robin "Scan Man" Rimbaut and I were holding court to an audience of Dutch digital theorists. To paraphrase Jimi Hendrix, have you ever been experienced, viz attendance at a digital art conference?

Maybe you have, maybe you haven't. I'll take that silence as a no. I've talked at a few during this past year and as a side-effect of these endeavours I have heard philosophical discussions on virtuality, among other gripping subjects. So forearmed with the knowledge of such sloughs of despond, I ventured to brighten the requested presentation on digital sampling, replication, the role of the artist in a post world for (was that the role of a pauper in an anarc world?) with The Singing Dogs.

Ahh, more crazy Easy Listening, you say. In a serious world why waste time discussing such not-so-incredibly-strange-after-all rubbish? Which just goes to show that you've never attended a digital art conference.

To be perfectly frank I've been getting a bit jaded with sampling histories, that Olympian leap from Stockhausen and Pierre Schaeffer to Negativland via Grandmaster Flash. Never mind the bag knobs. There have been inspired vernacular assaults on concrete music and sound sampling techniques during this history. The Singing Dogs is one of them.

Let me attempt some background beginning with a quote from the sleeve notes of *The Cooing Dogs Of Copenhagen: The Dog-Gone! Collection Of Real Canine Crooners Ever Assembled!* (released by Mr Pickwick in 1974) "Carl Wesmann of Copenhagen created this album," they claim, "by wandering around the streets armed, with his portable tape recorder, taping the best barks of two German Shepherds, a poodle, a terrier, and a pincer which he called Caesar, King, Pearl, Dolly and Pussycat."

Notwithstanding the unnecessary commas and the misguided imposition of such a burdensome name as Caesar King Pearl Dolly Pussycat on a Doberman (I assume a Doberman, though perhaps a man who barks and pinches), this passage could be an account of some avant rock musician preparing for his next show at the Knitting Factory.

Anyway, Herr Wesmann would repair to his studio

where, dressed in white shirt and tie, he would separate the barks into pitches, hang the tape snippets on the wall under the appropriate names and then create melodies from these pitches.

The music was revolting. Just the thing for the final presentation of a digital art conference, particularly knowing that whatever seriousness I could muster, the brown-mener would be blasted into oblivion by a barrage of jokes from my silly pal Robin. As it happened I stole a march on the Scan man. Concluding my esoteric demonstration of sampling relics with a Singing Dogs track, I was supposed to find I had picked an example with a quasi-free jazz section. The witty Wesmann, wagging Dane that he was, dismissed a scolding.

Schlagieresque military snare drum and vibraphone rendition of "Where Has My Little Dog Gone?" with a chaotic chorus of cat and dog caterwauling.

In Amsterdam the result was spectacular. Out of the audience emerged a large dog — no, I'm not making this up — which proceeded to walk around the stage in search of fellow hairy quadrupeds. Was it the cats? Was it the poignant theme of the song? Was it the need to discuss digital art and the future of pets?

Who knows? What really puzzles me is this: was the great Dane Wesmann the first Singing Dogs exponent? In 1955 The Singing Dogs rocketed to number 13 in the UK singles charts with a melody. A few interesting facts here. The Dogs, as they came to be known among hip fans, are positioned in my *British Hit Singles* reference book just above The Singing Nun (Belgium), which is, undoubtedly, all a bit Eurotrash. And of course, melodies are rarely hits, though I am sure there is a Mr Medley out there, living next door to Mr Sad and Mr Tickie, who knows all about the world of melodies. The final pertinent fact is this. The Singing Dogs, 55 vintage, are listed as a US canine vocal group.

I checked my histories of US vocal groups. Philip Groer's classic *They All Sang On the Corner!* listed nothing, which is strange, since if a dog is going to sing anywhere then it's going to sing on a corner. *ReSearchers* two volumes of *Incredibly Strange Music* index only



singing policemen and singing wrestlers, so unless I'm prepared to launch myself onto the World Wide Web on this one, I'm going to have to live with a gaping hole in my knowledge.

But life is supernatural, isn't it? I was telling North London's very own samplermaniac — John Wall — my shaggy dog story. The TV, broadcasting some crap in the background, suddenly burst into life with the sound of singing dogs, revved for the 90s thanks to the blanket marketing of all things canine and spotted. Those of you who have a thing about Glenn Close will know what I'm talking about.

Finding myself, only a few days ago, writing about the relationship of musical elaboration to non-verbal drama in *Losses* (sounds distressingly Cultural Studies if I describe it like that) for a Belgian film theory magazine seemed the most normal thing in the world after all this dog business. I made no mention of The Singing Dogs, figuring it would lead to a mention of The Singing Nun. The people of Belgium deserve to be allowed to forget.

Nesher nuns nor dogs (settle down at the back), The Spice Girls are what I have been listening to exclusively for the past four weeks. Sometimes eight times a day or more. Most excellent they are too, being a blatant rerun of a favourite pop period of mine: black pop/soul, circa 1981-83. Those of you who are not parents or dog lovers will fail to understand this column completely. □

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